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THE WAY OF THE WIND

BY

EVGENIA BROOKS FROTHINGHAM

By Eugenia Brooks Frothingham

THE WAY OF THE WIND.
HER ROMAN LOVER. Illustrated.
THE EVASION.
THE TURN OF THE ROAD.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO.
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

The Way of the Wind

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BY

EUGENIA BROOKS FROTHINGHAM

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1917

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Published February 1917

A boy's will is the wind's will

LONGFELLOW

The Way of the Wind

BOOK FIRST

The Way of the Wind

CHAPTER I

THERE was a slim, bright, young moon in the west, and hylas were singing in the marshes on that evening of early spring when Janet Eversly stepped down from the confinement, the almost inhuman glitter and thundering of a Pullman express, to the platform of a silent mountain station.

In the moment or two which passed before the arrival of her friend's motor she had time to realize the silence, the cool pure air, the presence of the crescent moon, so young, so frail, so bright, and the little voices that rose from the dark earth, — the shrill, sweet piping of hylas in the marshlands.

Then came the motor, and she was bundled into heavy wraps by a liveried chauffeur, and rushed into woods where the air was keen and damp.

It was her first visit to the mountain home

of a middle-aged and not very intimate friend: an unmarried woman, very distinguished, very wealthy, very competent to manage her farm and her fortune, who had acted upon sudden impulse when she had asked Janet to visit her. Janet, who was much younger, but not so young as a woman wishes to be, had no fortune, nor would she have spared the time to manage one. Her father had been a physician who did not collect his bills, and practiced only among the villagers of his country home. Just now she was bruised from the loss of him, whose death had left her an orphan.

The friend whose motor was now rushing her through the woods and up and down incredibly steep hills, had very recently been left alone by a similar loss, and it was this grief, common to both women, which had brought them together, making them something more than pleasant acquaintances of bridge and luncheon parties.

Janet, though still sensitive from pain, felt that existence was no longer absolutely bleak; but there was growing within her some fear and wonder as to the nature of life. Ten years ago

it had seemed to her a glowing, magical thing, tremulous with possibilities of ecstasy. To-day she wondered where the glow and the magic had gone. Looking at the substance of what life was spreading before her, she asked herself, as many have done before, "Is this to be all?"

She knew that Nature had fashioned her for certain things which the years had not brought, and her dismay that she should be so denied was passing before the realization that her experience was an average one. But this did not increase her love for life or her respect for it.

But in that moment of stillness when she had waited for the automobile, the aspect of things had changed suddenly, for there was mystery in the night and the woods. She realized suddenly that existence might still possess the magic, the possibilities of wonder and ecstasy it had held for her in early youth.

It was destined that she should not easily forget this night, the keenness of the mountain air, the smell and dampness of the woods, the occasional filtering through them of silvery, gossamer light from the young moon, and the

slight happy thrill that life was again vouchsafing her.

Had she been alone she would have held out her hands to the silver cobwebs of light and bathed her fingers in them.

After climbing a steep hill with much noise and competence, the automobile emerged suddenly into an open place swept bare of trees as by a great wind. It was as though Nature had decreed there should be this lofty and unencumbered spot where winds and stars and moons could hold high revelry. Below her Janet saw the dim, dark earth, and above her the mountain, reclining like some huge and dreaming monster against the sky.

It was only a moment before the car plunged again downward and into the woods, then up once more to the smooth ground and easy curves which proved to be Miss Chilworth's avenue. This brought Janet finally to the house which stood on a hill only somewhat less lofty and exposed than the one which had just brought her a moment of spiritual breathlessness.

At the noise of their arrival, the pillared

colonial doorway opened and the two women met on a glowing threshold. Janet received a cordial, assured welcome from Miss Chilworth, and her own greeting had the pretty flutter and eagerness caused by a constitutional and wholly involuntary wish to please.

The older woman was tall, and her face, with fine, pronounced features, was less tired, almost less faded than that of the guest, who was at least ten years younger. Janet was worn by travel, and since her father's death and the months of desolation which followed, her sensitive face, square and pale, with dark eyes set a little too far apart, had grown to show fatigue quickly.

Miss Chilworth expressed pleasure that the train had been on time, and asked Miss Eversly if the drive over lonely hills had made her feel that she was coming to a wilderness.

"If I came through one, I certainly have not come to one," answered the younger woman, looking around her at the wide, bright, and beautifully civilized hall that they had just entered. She saw white panels and a Gobelin tapestry, a reading lamp, and comfortable chairs

grouped about an open fire. A colonial staircase of perfect distinction led to rooms above, and facing the stairway were French windows, half concealed by curtains of a pale, clear green.

It was a room, beautiful and sophisticated, that might have been made more sympathetic or less so according to the people living in it. Her first brief glance showed Janet that there were no flowers in the two or three valuable vases for holding them, and she wondered why. Was it possible that Fanny Chilworth did not care for flowers?

"You must n't think that the whole region is as lonely as the part you came through," Miss Chilworth explained, while a maid removed and carried away her guest's motor wraps. "I have many neighbors down by the lake, and there is tennis, canoeing, and even dinner-parties if one wants them; but I don't, even when I am not in mourning. I built as far from the summer colony as I could because I think neighbors are a bore. Don't you?"

Janet murmured something indefinite, for on their first evening together she did not wish to differ with her hostess on such an important

matter of feeling, but she was conscious of a weak-minded preference for neighbors. It was rather disconcerting to think how little she actually knew of Fanny Chilworth.

"There is no one here so early as this, whether one wants them or not," continued Miss Chilworth. And then she showed her guest how the hall was built to occupy the largest part of the house, and that it was balanced by a library on one side and a dining-room on the other, an arrangement copied by Miss Chilworth from the villa of a dispossessed Brazilian Empress, which now stands pathetically open to visitors to a Portuguese island.

"I liked the design because it was simple," she told Janet. "Too many of our houses are lop-sided and confused in design."

Janet was eagerly glad to find herself in agreement with Miss Chilworth on this subject, and then she was taken to her room with the request not to look out of the window. "For you can't see anything worth seeing. It's too dark," said her hostess, "and I want everything to come as a surprise to-morrow. If you like what is inside, you will like what

is outside better. Never mind about dressing. There is no one in the house but ourselves. Dinner will be ready in about half an hour, so I will send Annie to help you at once."

She closed the door, but opened it again to say, "Don't be startled if the old dog comes scratching and crying at your door. This is," she paused to say, — "this is the room my brother used to have, and whenever any one else is in here, Ajax is restless."

The door closed quickly and Janet looked at the room with some curiosity. It was certainly not a man's room nor yet a boy's, and must have been repapered and curtained with old-fashioned chintz at some recent period, and designed for feminine occupancy. Was the brother never to return? She recalled vaguely what she had heard of him and remembered that he was a half-brother; the child of Mr. Chilworth's second marriage, and in some way a cause of anxiety and dissatisfaction.

But Janet found that the anticipation of an old dog whining and scratching at the threshold of a room where the man had lived, kindled in her a spark of sympathy for this unworthy son—

a sympathy that she stifled with the knowledge that many of society's derelicts are the beloved of dogs and children.

She was soon ready for dinner, and glad of a moment to herself in which to wander as she chose. Passing through the hall she entered a library, and here she felt at once that old Mr. Chilworth, widowed a second time, must have lived and grown old, found comfort in his pipe and books, and much sorrow because of the son whom people said he had greatly loved. The old man's death had been too recent for the room to have been changed, supposing it were conceivable that any one could wish to change the walls of books, the mahogany desk, the leather armchairs, bearing deep impress of him who had sat in them, and the general aspect of use and comfort which met one on the threshold like a tangible atmosphere. A wood fire, which had now fallen into embers that glowed and ruminated delightfully, shared with one lamp in lighting the room.

None of the windows opened to the ground like those of the hall, and the curtains were not drawn over them, so Janet, pressing her face

against a pane which was very cold, strove to see what was outside. But the light from behind her revealed only a lilac bush which was in its first meager leafhood, and looked very cold also. She turned again to the room, smiling at what she felt to be a middle-aged thought, as she said half aloud, "I love rooms, rooms like these, where one can have ease and comfort, and books and pictures that one loves, and where the cold cannot come, nor the rain, and where human beings have lived." But though she chose to play with this, as a middle-aged point of view, Janet was not middle-aged, otherwise she could not have smiled as she spoke.

Sitting near the fire in a chair that seemed to envelop and welcome her, she noticed a small photograph in an oval frame, which hung on the wall a little lower than the chimney, as though the person sitting where she sat had wished to have it near, and perhaps had been in the habit of taking it from the hook as Janet took it now, — to look at it by the firelight.

Her action was one of idle curiosity; but once seen, the pictured face held her attention. It was a young — young face, eager, tender, and

rather pitifully sensitive. The photograph was yellowed by the passing over it of many years, and some instinct told Janet that the woman pictured there had long since died. Who had she been? Surely no drop of that blood ran in Fanny Chilworth's veins. Looking closer as she bent near the firelight, Janet saw the word "Polly," written in fine, small letters at the top. "Polly!" It seemed a silly little name for so haunting and tender a personality. And then she remembered suddenly that Mr. Chilworth's second wife, who died when her son was born, had been so called. Part of the story came back to her now as she looked at the young wife's face, and she remembered to have heard that Fanny had been ready to "come out" when Mr. Chilworth chose for his second wife a girl scarcely older than his daughter.

He had met her in the South and brought her back without warning to his friends. A year after their marriage, the little wife and stepmother died, leaving behind a son, the boy who was "wild" and seemed to have forfeited his right to his father's house. Whether he had forfeited his place, or simply failed to

claim it after running away from college, Janet could not remember to have heard; but it was evident that Fanny was in absolute control of the property. Where was he now, this son, this only survivor, save a memory and a fading picture, of his parents' brief life together?

Looking into the shadows beyond the firelight, Janet found suddenly a pair of large eyes staring into her own, and they seemed so full of questioning and woe that they held her startled attention for some moments before she realized that they belonged to a Newfoundland dog.

"Old dog," she said, — for even in the dim light she could see that he was old and fat and gray about the muzzle, — "you must be Ajax. Ajax, come and speak to me."

At the sound of his name, the animal's ears quivered and his heavy tail brushed the rug slightly, so Janet knew that he was indeed the dog who had been expected at his master's door.

He did not come at her invitation, but continued to look at her with steady eyes full of questioning, and the rather awful pathos seen in the eyes of dumb creatures. Janet cried out suddenly as if she could not bear it.

"Old dog! Old dog! Can't I do something about it?" And she knelt down by him on the hearthrug.

The creature continued to look at her for some moments, without sign of pleasure, and then with absolute gravity he uncrossed one of his huge paws and laid it over the back of her hand. After that she caressed him and laid her face against his head, calling him by those names with which women who love dogs are wont to call them, and then Fanny came in to say that it was dinner time. She spoke kindly to the animal who rose at her entrance, and remarked upon his making friends with Janet. "He is usually reserved with strangers."

"He is reserved with me," said Janet, "and it is I who am making friends with him. But he has a very upsetting way of looking at one. What is it or who is it that he wants?"

"He misses father," said Fanny in a low voice, patting the dog's head as he pressed it against her knee. And then she added as though unwillingly, "He was very fond of Edgar, too. Dinner is ready. Shall we go in?"

CHAPTER II

THE next day there was nothing but mist to be seen from the windows of Fanny Chilworth's house, and for nearly a week the two women, little more than acquaintances, were closed in together. They emerged from the ordeal without mishap, if not victoriously, having both passed that age of girlhood when an interchange of life secrets is necessary for ordinary friendship, and reached the period when, finding the whole to be impossible, they are comfortably tolerant of something a good deal less, and accept half-loaves without comment or surprise.

There are some who, while accepting, never forget that their portion is only half, and Janet was beginning to feel herself one of these, but so far as Miss Chilworth was concerned, she was willing enough that things should be friendly, if without warmth. During the first few days their intercourse had been a little meager, a little scantily clad, like the shrubs and lilac bushes that occasionally showed themselves through the mist. Fanny had no marked talent

for companionship, but Janet possessed enough for both, and under her eager sympathy and humor, the older woman began to seem less like one of her own handsome but empty flower vases.

Weather made little difference in the outdoor activity of Miss Chilworth. Clad in a rain-proof skirt and coat, she paid daily visits to every part of her estate, and sometimes Janet went with her. There were dairies and henhouses of scientific perfection, and a garage with glossy cars. There was a touring-car, a limousine made in Paris, and a runabout of blue enamel and silver. Old Mr. Chilworth must have left his daughter a large fortune, and Janet often caught herself wondering as to the condition of his son, so mysteriously absent and dispossessed.

Not the least admirable of Miss Chilworth's accomplishments was her training of servants, for Janet granted that it might be an accomplishment. American boys and men of the farmer class do not voluntarily have good manners. They do not touch their hats when summoned or dismissed, or stand in respectful

attitudes while spoken to, yet all Fanny Chilworth's men, from the small boy who helped with the care of the cows to the head chauffeur, did so stand and salute, though most of them were American-born. Janet almost wished that they had less good manners. It hurt her to see one human being so subservient to another, and it was with a smile of mixed amusement and pleasure that she thought of her old family coachman whose custom it was to turn about on his box and enter into friendly discourse with his employers in the back seat. Such a custom had made them laughed at by the neighbors, and though they suffered from the laughter, neither herself nor her father had ever found the courage to rebuke their old servant. Janet would have liked to ask Fanny's assistant chauffeur, who was very young, how he took such a dreadful cough; but she would not have ventured upon such a familiarity, and was comforted later in the day to overhear Miss Chilworth ordering medicine to be sent him.

"Unless I can help it, I never speak to those people except to give orders," she told Janet. "And I never dare to be too kind to them, or

they think I value them too much and begin to take liberties."

Indoors the two friends sewed and talked and read pleasantly enough, while the rainy days passed. Fanny Chilworth explained that the heavy mist was not a fog but cloud.

"We are much too high up for fog," she said.

"It's certainly more romantic to think we are in the clouds," Janet admitted. "Some one said that bald eagles are often seen on the mountain, so I shall write to my friends that we live among clouds and eagles, and that to plant a flower we must blast a rock, which last statement is actually true judging by your experience; and it rounds out the picture." She paused a little to reflect upon it, and to wonder if she would wish to make her home in such a place, and then sighed, realizing how scant a likelihood there was of her owning a home in any place.

"And I am tired of traveling," she told her friend, who proved a good listener. "Papa never did anything else during the last few years of his life. I have crossed the ocean so often that I know the deck-stewards of every steamer,

and London is less strange than New York, and there is n't a thrill left in arrivals or departures, or hopes of a 'sea change into something rich and strange.' There is n't," — she sighed and, lifting her arms, clasped them behind her head impatiently, — "there is n't any longer a far-away, and that is a dreadful loss."

"But last winter, south of the Mediterranean, that was new for you?"

"Yes, it was new, and interesting, and I had to go. I could not have stayed on in the house alone even if I could have afforded to. Papa's pension was the only thing that enabled us to live in so big a place. So when the Masons asked me I was glad to go. They were dears and loved everything, and seeing something new every day was good for me. But it is n't nutritious food in the long run.

"We had a day at Algiers where we walked through the Moorish village with a guide and held up our skirts and wondered and shivered and cried that it was fascinating. And we blinked at Naples and had shampoos and got at our trunks in Genoa, and motored through the Riviera, of which I know every mountain-

peak, and where we saw the usual people. Now I am at home and wishing it were a home; wishing there were some reason other than my own whim for being in one part of the world rather than the other; wishing there might be some one whose stockings I might darn — not that I like darning stockings, because I do not; but wishing there might be some one for whom I could do something I did n't personally care for."

"You must marry," said Fanny Chilworth.

Janet did not answer. There were limits beyond which she did not feel impelled to confide in her new friend. She knew herself to be of the age when she should begin to think seriously of matrimony if she were to think of it at all; but she was not yet old enough to tolerate the thought of marriage for companionship. It was only lately that she had once or twice come to fear that she might some day be able to tolerate it.

Miss Chilworth seemed to feel that so far as matrimony was concerned, the subject was closed, and broke the pause with another view of Janet's situation.

"When the weather clears and you can see

the mountain, I hope you may feel like spending the summer with me, as we planned," she said. "I am as much alone in the world as you are, though I have more occupation."

Janet thanked her for the invitation, which was cordially spoken, and then she ventured to ask the question that had been in her thoughts ever since the evening of her arrival.

"I have wondered if we were to be alone, or if your brother were coming back. Please excuse me if I am impertinent."

Miss Chilworth was not offended, though she looked into the fire for some moments with a deep line between her handsome brows.

"I do not know whether my brother will come back or not," she answered at last. "I do not know that he will ever come back. There are times when I do not care. Does this seem dreadful to you?"

"What is he like?" asked Janet.

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know how to describe him!" answered Fanny with impatience and weariness in her voice. "I think I should chiefly describe him as unstable with increasingly vicious tendencies. As a child he

was always being naughty and being sorry for it. They said no child ever was naughtier or more sorry for it. At boarding-school, he was in trouble of different kinds, and once he ran away and went to sea like the heroes of a boy's story, and there he took part in a mutiny. We had to have an investigation of dreadful publicity, after which he was almost inhumanly good for a whole summer and fitted himself for college without a tutor. Edgar was always clever enough for anything he wanted. At college more trouble began and there were threats of expulsion, till one Friday afternoon when he got into a game of poker which lasted till Sunday morning, and then he drank, and then he went to chapel. There was a scene during the service. He did not wait to be expelled. The next day he was gone, and I have never heard from him since."

"How terrible!" said Janet, very low.

"Yes, it was terrible."

"I meant *is* terrible!" said Janet.

"But now at least there is peace," answered Edgar's sister. "Ever since his birth he has been my hair shirt. He made me suffer before

he was born, for his mother stole the love and the memory that belonged to mine. She was the natural child of a governess and of the only son of a very old and dissipated Southern family. Her mother was nobody, of course, and she was educated by the father and brought up in great seclusion, and, as I remember her, she was a pathetic little person who seemed surprised to be happy and who had no self-control at all. There were those who said that my father married her because he was sorry for her: but that was not true. He loved her! He loved her!"

Fanny paused, but continued with an effort.

"He loved her more than he had ever loved his first wife, and it was n't easy to forgive her and the child for that. But when the baby came and his mother died, I made myself forgive him. I would even have loved him if he had let me. I have not thought so much or planned so much or tried so much for anything in this world as for Edgar; it was all no use."

"I should think it would have broken your heart," said Janet; but Fanny answered that she had not cared enough for that.

"And have you never heard from him since he ran away?"

"Never. He left no word, nor has he sent one, nor do I even know whether he is alive or dead, though no trouble or expense has been spared to find out. My father died the following autumn; his son's disgrace helped to kill him."

"Your father died the following autumn? But that was only six months ago. Then Edgar must be very young. I thought he was a man of thirty at least!"

"How could he be? I was nearly twenty before he was born and now I am forty-two. Edgar was twenty-three last month."

"But then he is only a boy!" cried Janet, much startled. "Only a boy! Oh, it cannot be too late to save him, if one could only find him and bring him home."

But Fanny Chilworth shook her head.

"When you are as old as I am you will have learned the hopelessness of trying to reform people," she said; "though none can really know how hopeless it is till they have had such a bitter experience as mine."

"It would have broken my heart," said Janet again.

During the day or two that followed Fanny Chilworth spoke intimately of herself and her life. She even gave her confidence more freely than Janet, who regretted that she could not yet feel so warmly toward Miss Chilworth as that lady evidently did toward herself. If the older woman's nature seemed a little graceless, the woman herself sought to do right. Moreover, Janet was conscious that Miss Chilworth would like to win her affection, and made rather timid, unaccustomed efforts to do so. These efforts touched the girl, for she felt that the winning of affection had played an inconspicuous part in Fanny's life.

It came to be understood that Janet should spend the summer with her new friend, and on the sixth day of her stay the clouds brightened, and the wind, changing from the northeast, came soothingly and sweetly in through a long French window that opened to the south.

There are those who will have it that events march at our bidding, that our hopes and our fears are magnets that inevitably control our

lives; but life is too big for us to hypnotize. Events do not answer our expectancy, but seem to come without warning as though with perverse intent to surprise or disappoint.

So it happened that just when the search had been abandoned, and Fanny Chilworth had ceased to dread the mails, or to listen for the light, swift footfall which would bring her pain, Edgar came back.

She and Janet were looking expectantly into the brightening clouds.

"Any moment now you may see the mountain," said Fanny, and they began to make gay, peaceful little plans for the months to come.

Only the old dog seemed warned, for he was restless, and though the damp week had made him more than usually rheumatic, he rose several times to look through the open window and sniff. Once he lifted his muzzle and sent a prolonged howl into the land of clouds that still surrounded him. Then, in answer to the remonstrance of his mistress, he came back and laid his head upon her knee, looking at her with eyes that the drooping red underlids helped to make tragic.

"He seems trying to tell you something," said Janet.

"He is telling me that spring is come," answered Miss Chilworth.

"He does n't look as though he were thinking of spring. Oh, look, Fanny! I can see a shadbush snow-white with bloom. We have never seen so far before."

"It is clearing fast," admitted Fanny. "In another moment now you should be able to see the sugar-maples."

"Where can I plant my pansies?"

"Anywhere you like. We will plant them as soon as we can go out. But they may not bloom the first year from seed before the frost comes."

"Oh, mine will! I'm sure that my pansies will bloom before frost."

"You'd better let me send for plants already grown."

"But it's so much more fun making them grow yourself."

"But if they won't grow —"

"Mine will."

Fanny smiled indulgently. "We will try both ways," she said.

"You are an angel," Janet told her. And then she bent forward suddenly, trying to look through the mist which had swept up again. "I saw a strange man on the lawn a second ago; the cloud has hidden him again."

"It was James," said Fanny indifferently.

But before the cloud passed on, Edgar came plunging out of it. He entered the room violently, and then, seeing his sister, he fell back a step and leaned against the wall just inside of the French window.

Fanny cried his name stridently. The old dog dragged himself across the floor to his master's feet and lay there whimpering softly and licking his boots.

The boy himself breathed hard and seemed a creature of violence and despair. He was dressed like a tramp; his shirt open at the throat, his trousers stained, and moisture, either of rain or sweat, was running down his haggard young face.

For a moment the brother and sister stared hostilely at each other; then —

"When did father die?" he asked.

"Last autumn. You helped to kill him."

The boy looked as though he would leap upon her.

"What are you? What are you? A Gorgon or a woman?"

"I tell the truth," answered his sister.

As though he believed her, his head dropped suddenly; a weight of despair was in the gesture and bowed his shoulders with it.

"Have you just heard?"

He answered her slowly with his head still bowed from her vision.

"Something made me come back. I thought — he might want me to try to make good again. It took me a month to get here. At the station they told me. But I came on. I could n't have left without finding out — if —" He paused, and, lifting one hand, swept the damp hair from his forehead. "I thought he might have left me a message," said Edgar.

Fanny did not answer, and in the silence a sharp wet wind struck him till he shivered and sought to draw his shirt across his bare throat.

He now looked at her with haggard, pleading eyes. "There must have been something," he said. "If there was n't I will go and never come

back, but there must have been some message—some —"

It seemed as though Fanny struggled with herself before she answered. "There was a message."

And then Janet rose from her place and fled.

CHAPTER III

THE fire was burning low in Janet's room when she took refuge there, and after she had sought to steady herself by rekindling the flame, she knelt down before the burning logs and began to cry.

The brief scene, so violent and so unhappy, affected her poignantly. The stormy, agonized boy, unwelcome in his father's home, was pathetically foolish and tragic. What had he done, after all, that he should accept being an outcast? And what a child he was? How unlearned in worldly lessons that he should be willing to disappear with his shame and grief without claiming the share of a property to which he must certainly have been entitled!

Why had Fanny Chilworth hesitated before telling him there was a message for him? Was it possible that even for a moment Edgar's sister had been tempted to spare herself by letting him go? If so, Janet felt that she could not pass the summer with Fanny.

All the afternoon she sat there, thinking and

questioning, and listening to the voices below. The boy's voice grew lower till his monosyllables were almost inaudible; Fanny's tones were steady and fluent, continuing with what seemed increasing confidence. Then at last, after several hours, there came a pause, a strange footfall in the house, the closing of a door, and finally Miss Chilworth's knock at her guest's room.

She came in looking spent and older. "That was Edgar," she said.

"Has he gone?"

"No, he is to stay — always — till the next time!" And she sat down on the edge of Janet's bed.

"I ran away just as you told him there was a message," said Janet. "Fanny, before we say another word I must ask you why you kept him waiting so long before you told him. He was nearly gone. Did you feel for a moment that you could not endure to have him back in your life again?"

"I was tempted," admitted Edgar's sister. "Oh, you don't know what we are, so to speak, 'in for,' now that he has come! But I could

never have let him go when it came to the point. I could n't have! Why, Janet, you must think me the Gorgon he does, if you think I could ever have done that!"

"I did n't. I only wondered, and I am so sorry that I did even that. It was only because you waited, and he looked so cold."

Fanny sighed. "It was just like him to look cold, and wet, and poor, and come out of the storm like that with every dramatic accessory to startle and win sympathy," she said. "There are some people who never seem able to win sympathy however much they may deserve it, and there are others with something about them who win it even if they are criminals. There's always been this something about Edgar. I can see that he has touched you; but wait — wait till you know him as I do. Why could n't he have written that he wanted to come back, and asked me to send him his clothes? Then he could have arrived at the station and been brought home like any one else in the automobile. But no, that would n't be Edgar. He has n't a thing but a razor and a toothbrush, and what he had on his back when

he burst in upon us. He's getting into some of his college clothes now, and at least they are whole and dry. But he has just sent to know if I can find him some collars. How can I find him collars? I asked what he traveled in, and he says that as he walked part of the way and came on stolen rides in baggage cars the rest of it, clothes did n't matter. Once he hid in a collier and came a long way covered up with coal! Some little money he made was stolen from him one night while he was ill. Think of my brother being a tramp and stealing rides like a hobo!"

"He's such a child," said Janet. "There must be hope for any one so young who can feel so much ashamed."

"Of what use is his shame since it cannot keep him straight a month? I have hoped so much for him and hoped so often! He began to do well just before he ran away. I had a long talk with him, and he was grateful when he heard that I had been paying his gambling debts out of my own money, so that papa, who was very ill, might not be troubled by them. Then, seeing my chance, I appealed to the best

of him. I told him how he had it in his power to make his father suffer. And then he said that he often thought papa had never forgiven him for being the cause of his mother's death any more than I had forgiven him for being her son. But I told him how untrue this was. Papa had demanded rectitude and stability of him and been bitterly disappointed when he had not given them, and I made myself say what I had always believed: that if he had been less cause of anxiety and distress to papa, he would have cared for him more than he ever cared for me. I could see that this touched him. Oh, Edgar is easily touched! He stood for a long time with his head down as he used to do when he was a child and ashamed, and was silent for so long that it seemed as if he were never going to speak again. Then he walked out of the room slowly with his face turned away, and I never saw him again until to-day. After that we heard that he was quite reformed, working hard, giving up gambling and drinking and all the gay life. At the midyear exams his report showed him to be doing well, all of which seemed too good to last, and was. In February papa

had a bad time, but he came well out of it and on the first day that he looked at his mail, he found a letter from Edgar saying that he had n't come in because he did n't want to see him again till he could prove that, if he could not yet be a source of pride, he could at least be a son of whom a father need not be ashamed. The letter had been written a week before, and papa handed it to me with such a radiant face! I had just come in to tell him of Edgar's final and most intolerable disgrace and flight: the one of which you know."

"How sad! How sad!" cried Janet. "Oh, I think it is a cruel world where people are so made that they want to do right and cannot."

"That is almost blasphemous," said Fanny. "Edgar could do right if he wanted to enough. He admits that himself. Oh, he is at his best now. You will see him ashamed and humble, and grateful for papa's goodness. Papa, you see, left him his mother's share of money, which is small, and equal shares with me in the rest of the property, if he can prove by his conduct during the next few years that he is worthy to handle it."

"Of what," interrupted Janet, "is his worthiness to consist?"

"In behaving like any one else, of course: staying at home and going into business, any business that I approve of. Papa realized that I must be the one to decide, and not Edgar, for, if left to himself, he would probably choose something like aeroplaning."

"What happens if he should refuse business and take to — aeroplanes?"

"He loses all share in papa's property except a small portion left in trust, enough to support him in case he should lose or do away with his mother's share. But he is n't going to refuse, at least not for the moment. He is ready for any penance now, and I have given him a letter his father wrote him and sealed some months before he died. I don't know what it contains, but I imagine it is going to make Edgar more eager than ever to do right. You will see him, Janet, at dinner, contrite enough to soften the hardest heart."

"But I don't want to see him at dinner! How he will hate me for being here!" exclaimed the girl, distressed by this view of

the situation. "And does n't he want his room back?"

"Certainly not! Do you consider it furnished for a man? And Edgar must n't think he can behave as he has, disgrace his family, run away to escape the disgrace, stay away because he was too weak or heartless or generally wild to lead a respectable life, and then be received with a fatted calf."

She rose from the bed. "Was it only to-day we were planning about pansies?" She asked with a wan smile. "We shall have other things than pansies to think of now. I must go and hunt up Edgar's collars."

"Don't you want me to leave?" asked Janet. "It seems as if you could not want me now."

"If you say one word about leaving me at this crisis I will never forgive you," cried Fanny, with some heat; and she left the room closing the door sharply behind her as if to close the question.

Janet contemplated having a headache which would prevent her from meeting Edgar on the evening of his unhappy return. But she finally

went down at the latest possible moment and found Fanny alone in the hall.

"We will go in," she repeated. "Edgar is late, but I have sent him word dinner is ready."

"How he will hate me!" said Janet, entering the dining-room reluctantly. "Does he know I am here?"

"I told him, of course."

The maid returned to say that Mr. Edgar asked to be excused because he did not feel like eating.

"He is Mr. Chilworth, not Mr. Edgar now," corrected Fanny, "and you will please go up and tell him that I want him to come down because I had something cooked which I know he used to like. It's just like Edgar to stop eating because he's in trouble," she added, turning to Janet when the maid had left. "But he is thin enough already. He must eat."

"Did you find his collars?"

"Not one."

"Fanny Chilworth! I think it's cruelty to force a man to meet a woman for the first time in a dining-room like this when he has no collar

on, and probably no cuffs either. Why don't you send something up to him?"

"When you have lived as a hobo you can't be much preoccupied with such matters as collars."

The maid appeared.

"Mr. Edgar says —"

"Mr. Chilworth, Annie."

"Mr. Chilworth. Excuse me, Miss, but it's hard to think of him as anything but a boy and him looking so thin and young. Mr. Chilworth thanks you kindly and will come down at once."

It was in fact only a moment or two before Edgar came and paused just beyond the threshold as if startled and bewildered by the light and the stranger, whose presence he seemed to have forgotten.

His eyes, very large, dark, and set far apart under a wide brow, were the first things that Janet noticed as they opened wide upon her with a gaze of startled dismay. It was dreadful to be looked at so by anything so young and defenseless as Fanny Chilworth's brother appeared to be in that moment. Janet thought

she had never seen such eyes, as she had just time to realize before his sister's introduction stayed him from backing out of the room, and so escaping the guest for whose presence he had been insufficiently prepared.

He acknowledged with a few incoherent words the greeting Janet sought to make easy, and took the seat opposite his sister without again lifting his eyes, — a subdued and unhappy boy, whose eyelids were swollen from evident weeping.

Janet and Fanny spoke of the weather, of the prospects, even once of pansies, feeling it kindest not to divert Edgar by bringing him into the light talk. Indeed, diversion in connection with so unhappy a figure was not to be thought of, but Janet longed, and longed again, to be able to make him smile.

A dark coat was buttoned as tightly as possible about his throat. This gave him an odd and rather pathetic resemblance to a very young and very innocent curate. Remembering Edgar's life Janet smiled at the fantasy of such a resemblance. Once he lifted his eyes and looked about the room as though wonder-

ing at its brightness and richness, and Fanny caught the look.

"You see that I have changed the room," she said. "Do you like it?"

"Yes," answered the boy after a moment of consideration.

"What was it before?" asked Janet.

"Full of that dreadful Eastlake furniture," answered Fanny.

"It was the only kind we had," said Janet. "Papa never knew that it was dreadful, and I never knew it either till a few years ago. Is n't it humiliating to have been able to sit so long and so happily upon dreadful furniture?"

For the first time Edgar's eyes met those of his guest. On Janet's lips was a timid little smile, and her warm, dark-blue eyes seemed to say, "Please, please don't be too sorry I 'm here."

But there came no smile on Edgar's lips, and his eyes answered hers with a sudden agony of shyness. Very quickly he looked again into his plate, and after that he became conscious of his collarless state. He sought once or twice to pull the coat farther over his throat, and it was evident that his experience as a tramp had

neither caused him to sink below nor to rise above social vanities. Janet found his preoccupation with his lack of collar rather lovable and pathetic.

"You have n't eaten a thing," said Miss Chilworth to her brother as they all rose at the end of the meal.

"I could n't, but I am sure that it was very nice," he answered and started to leave the two women, seemed to consider saying good-night to Janet, found it impossible, and fled to his room.

"What do you think of him?" asked Edgar's sister as they took their usual seats by the fire.

"What can I think, except that he is the most unhappy-looking creature I have ever seen."

"Yes, is n't he? Edgar was always like that, — when he was unhappy at all. You can see that he is trying very hard to be good."

"He looks as though he were almost too good to live, without any trying at all."

"Yes. I feel like saying again, 'Edgar was always like that.'"

"Do you remember the face of a young monk

who plays the organ in a picture at the Doré Gallery?"

"I think so."

"Edgar's face is more like that than any face I have ever seen."

His sister sighed.

CHAPTER IV

JANET wandered alone in that dreamlike place, — that place of lovely essences, of tremulous shy young life, of an exquisiteness there are no words to tell of — which is spring. The green of young leaves was over the land like a vapor, or like a gauze blown from the south and caught on sharp branches. Among the green was the gleam and the drift of white blossoms, the pale fire of flowering maples. It was a world unsubstantial as vision.

Janet stared into it with sudden tears in her eyes, though if you had asked her why, she could only have told you that the loveliness hurt and made her think of those things which might be and are not; which is perhaps half — perhaps only a hundredth part — of the reason why beauty brings nostalgia to the hearts of men.

Birds were singing through this dream-place, and winds that had been on the mountain-side blew through it gently. Men and boys sang as they went about their work. And Janet wandered inconsequently, as the lift of the

ground, or the invitations of a grove or a path bade her; and came suddenly upon Edgar.

Dressed in one of the dark suits left over from his college years, he sat huddled up by a mountain brook, among birch trees whose stems gleamed like bright spirits through the vaporous green of tiny leaves. A trout-rod was by his side, and with his knees drawn up to his chin and hands clasped about them, he sat staring into the fairylike world with large, desolate eyes.

During the two days since his arrival Janet had realized that her presence as a stranger who knew his story was intolerable to him.

"He shrinks from me," she told Fanny, "and I don't think any one ever did before. It hurts —"

He hurt her again as she came upon him suddenly — a violently somber creature in the bright woods. Was it only a trick of feature or some deep quality of his nature which made his face at times more sad than any she had ever looked upon?

His profile as she saw it now, pale and clear-cut against the leaves, was almost beautiful

with its purity and balance of feature. A nose, slightly curved, gave it spirit and individuality, and a lower lip, which, like that of a child, was shorter than its fellow, lent it an appealing charm. His young body, small and slender, but powerful, was curved over his knees like that of the pictured Bather, and Janet thought Michael Angelo might have put him into marble and called him, "Greek Youth in Captivity." Yet she knew that he was only an American young man with an aptitude for falling into disagreeable scrapes.

But sitting there in the spring world with desolate eyes and the things men play with forgotten by his side, he was just one thing — an unhappy boy, and Janet thought that she could no longer endure to have him so. Moreover, she did not intend that he should continue in his objection to her presence, so she made a little noise to attract his attention, and as he looked up startled — rising hastily as though to move away — she called to him.

"Wait a moment. I am coming over to ask you to do something for me." And crossing a rough bridge that spanned the brook, she seated

herself upon the bank and motioned him to her side.

He sat as before with knees drawn up to his chin and looked at her with his amazingly eloquent dark-gray eyes in which there was now surprise and hostility.

"I wanted you to do something for me," she repeated, and paused while he continued to look at her with the mysterious and often disconcerting immobility of children and trapped wild things. But Janet was not disconcerted. She felt unusually competent, though for a moment she looked away into the brook:—

"Is it a good trout stream?"

"I have n't tried."

"I am fond of brook trout."

"Did you come over to ask me to catch some?"

"No." She turned to him again. "I came to ask you if you could n't just pretend not to mind my being in the same house with you. I don't ask you not to mind, — that might be too difficult, — but if you could just pretend —"

He looked down suddenly shamefaced, and dug with a little stick among the moss.

Janet thought, "If I could only make him smile! I wonder what it would look like?" Aloud she continued, "You see, to have you feel so makes it hard for me. Fanny has made me promise to stay a month at least, so I must, and perhaps — well, perhaps if you keep on pretending for a whole month that you like me to stay here, you might become such an expert that when I left you, you could make me believe you were sorry to have me go."

The boy looked up and his lips parted into a ridiculously small smile.

"I am sorry if I have been rude," he said.

"And you won't be any more?"

His lips formed, rather than spoke, the word, "No." He was looking at her now with a new expression, as though he were seeing her for the first time and was intensely conscious of her personality.

"Will you catch me a trout some time?"

The persistence of his grave look was almost embarrassing before his eyes released hers, and sought the stream.

"I would get you one now if the sun were not so high."

"Is it really a good trout stream? It looks to me very rough, and I should think the poor little fish would hurt themselves banging against all those stones."

This time Edgar's smile was frankly radiant. "You don't think that, really? You are only saying it to make me laugh."

"Well," answered Janet, "and have n't I?" She was pleased as by a victory, for Janet also possessed an appeal of her own, a charm which she had lived too long not to realize, and which she had relied upon when she crossed the bridge to Edgar's side.

"There is something else I want to say," she told him with a change of manner. "You probably noticed that I am in mourning."

"Yes," he said, "I have noticed."

"My father also has died. He died little less than a year ago, and he was more than anything — he was more than everything in the world to me. I tell you this because, as I must be here a little longer, I don't want you to feel that I am an alien, entirely outside of your experience."

"You were good to him?" asked Edgar. His

face changed. A thousand nerves seemed to lie just under the skin and every one of them twitched with pain. "I am sure you were good to him."

"I hope so — yes, I know I was."

"I was n't. I was not a good son. I kept away from home. I liked to be with the boys. I made him ashamed of me. I was worse than nothing to him and I have just learned — " He put his hand over an inner pocket and she guessed that his father's letter was there. "I have just learned that I might have been everything. That is the awful thing. That is what — " His voice broke, and with an incredibly swift movement he rose, and turning from her, plunged into the woods.

That day he did not appear at luncheon, but Janet assured his sister of his safety.

"I saw him only an hour or so ago in the woods," she said, "and I made him smile."

"I hope you may do it again."

"I never saw a face that had so many expressions."

"His mother's face was like that."

"I may as well confess, Fanny, that whether

he smiles or not, I find him a very winning boy."

"I suppose he is until one realizes his instability, his actual worthlessness."

"I don't believe he is worthless," cried Janet. "I won't have it so."

"Let us say, then, that he is gold with a lamentable facility for disintegration."

Janet did not more than half like the simile, but let it pass without protest. "He is so thin!" she said.

"I am glad you are older than he is," continued Fanny, "or he would fall in love with you."

"Is falling in love one of his habits?"

"Oh, yes! He follows round one silly, pretty face after another."

"But I have n't a silly, pretty face."

"You have something more dangerous."

"It might be a good thing for him to fall in love with me," said Janet thoughtfully. "If I could be his 'Princesse Lointaine,' I could keep him in safety until some one came who could be his wife."

"Janet!"

"Fanny!" she mimicked her gently. "Don't tell him how young or how old I am. He knows I am your friend and probably thinks we are about the same age."

"Not if he has looked twice," said Fanny generously.

"He has n't, but he will now—after this morning by the brook. Often I think I look older than you, because I look more tired. So let him think as he likes and then I can be a mother to him without danger. I won't do him harm, I promise, and I may do him good."

"Mother him all you like, provided you don't spoil my discipline," answered Edgar's sister.

CHAPTER V

EDGAR was late to breakfast the next morning and Fanny Chilworth's brow was showing signs of displeasure before he ran up the piazza steps and entered the dining-room eagerly.

"I was so afraid you would have finished," he said to Janet. "See what I have got." And lifting the lid of a fishing-basket he showed her four shining trout lying on grass. His eyes, still too grave for his age, sought her face as though questioning her pleasure, and finding it, he gave a small, swift smile.

"I thought you would like them. See, Fanny! Are n't they beauties?"

His sister did not like the sight or smell of raw fish, and her perfectly appointed breakfast-room was essentially the place in which she should not have been called upon to endure them. Moreover, the fisherman's own appearance, his stained clothes and hands, were a distinct intrusion. But she tried to be kind. "I shall like them better when they are cooked," she said. "We will have them for luncheon.

Take them away now, and, my dear boy, do freshen yourself up a little before you have breakfast."

Edgar's smile had a short life, but he would not withdraw his plan for Janet and herself to have them for breakfast.

"Miss Eversly said she wanted them for breakfast," he insisted, "and it's not a bit too late. Mary Anne will cook them in a jiffy while I change. I ran all the way home to get here on time."

It was obvious that the coffee would be cold and the morning appetite faded before trout could be cooked even with the best efforts of Mary Anne, but Janet declared that she wished nothing so much as the fish and Fanny submitted.

"This is perfectly ridiculous!" she said when they had dallied with the oatmeal as long as possible and now wondered what to do with the dropped eggs.

"There's nothing so horrid as a cold dropped egg," said Janet. "But if we eat them now and wait ten minutes before the trout come, what will seem more horrid than a trout? Yet how

can we hurt his feelings when he is trying to please us."

"It's a pity Edgar has so many feelings. Annie, bring me a match. I will heat the coffee again. I think we had better eat the eggs."

"But won't they spoil the trout?"

"The whole breakfast is spoiled whatever we do."

"And he tried to make it a delicious breakfast."

Fanny sighed. "Janet, do you think men have any sense?"

"They are funny things," agreed Janet.

It happened that the trout were cooked and eaten before Edgar came down.

"I shall not find fault with him this time," said Miss Chilworth, "but of course he must be trained out of these habits."

Janet was obliged to admit the reason and justice of Fanny's attitude; but as the days went on she wondered if these immutable qualities were precisely the ones of which Edgar was most in need. His remorse was evidently a violent, torturing thing, and Janet could have loved him for his susceptibility to shame.

Fanny Chilworth was determined that, "for the strengthening of his character," he should not be spared one dreg in the cup of his wrong-doing, and he accepted her attitude with a humility which Janet felt could not last. She herself tried to woo him from melancholy by sympathy and an occasional mirth which roused in him a shy and surprised response. His days seemed of unnatural loneliness, and sometimes she wondered if his home or sister possessed the qualities which could help him to a safe and happy life.

It was increasingly evident that he would dislocate the well-ordered motions of Fanny's existence. Regular hours, conventions, laws, precautions, and the care of things, were strange and rather contemptible to one who had come and gone at will upon the open road. His natural impulses led him to the mountain-top at dawns and moonrises. He would break a well-designed plan for some childish whim, and follow a whim through superhuman efforts of pedestrianism and sleeplessness. In order to rid woods of porcupines that the old dog might walk there with safety, he ordered a gun,

and left the shining, pitiless thing on Fanny's piazza, to her serious alarm. He smoked incessantly, and left cigarette ashes upon her Persian rugs.

Swift and resolute in his movements, his steps in the house meant commotion of some kind: the upsetting of a meal, an impetuous plea for some obviously impractical and extravagant plan of camping on the mountain-side, the story of some adventure in which one of Fanny's horses, or the blue-and-silver runabout, had been used without her permission.

Miss Chilworth feared that the servants would not endure the extra work put upon them by Edgar's irregular hours of eating, and she sought to insist upon a punctuality which was evidently insufferable to him and against which he frequently rebelled.

Even during his hours of absence Edgar's existence annoyed Miss Chilworth, for the old dog, sometimes too rheumatic for exercise, whined softly and obstinately from the moment when his master disappeared until he came back again, and the sound was exasperating. Fanny told Edgar that she did not think she could

endure it; but the boy was touched by Ajax's affection, and after a day of activity he would sit on the steps and hold the dog's head on his knee, playing with his ears and scolding him with a humorous tenderness which Janet found very pleasant to watch. The discussion ended temporarily when Edgar carried the creature off on his shoulder and put him in the automobile or carriage which he used when going any great distance.

"And, of course," said Fanny, "the dog has scratched the varnish, and ruined the appearance of my car." She was sincerely fond of animals; but poor Ajax's rheumatic existence was as little a pleasure to himself as to others; it might, therefore, be best to put him to rest by a merciful bullet.

"I would put a bullet into you or myself first," said Edgar roughly, a remark which Miss Chilworth felt to be of brutal insolence.

He was soon made to feel that to use his sister's possessions without permission was the crime of all crimes.

"What are things for — to use, or to keep?" he asked Janet stormily.

"They are to use in such a way that they will keep," she answered and felt secretly ashamed that the answer was so admirable. She knew herself to be over-lighthearted about things. Life must be unusually empty on the day when a loss or a breakage could seriously affect her spirits.

Existence was not less interesting or funny or sad because a vase was broken. Personal possession did not mean life for her, but she was conscious that, as she went through the years and found the doors of adventure closing to her one by one, those things which are legally possessed and kept in rooms and stables and garages would matter more and more.

But there was that in her which gave her comprehension of vagabondage. She knew that voices called to Edgar which his sister could never hear. To Fanny, the precious values were those that are known as the tried and orderly. Care of property was almost her religion; method, her ritual; and to Edgar all this seemed to be nothing, or less than nothing. Of his plunge into the dark mystery of an underworld he did not speak.

Both women felt that he had been dipped

in dark, mysterious waters, which must have somehow and somewhere transmuted him. To Fanny the experience seemed only one of shame and degradation regarding which she could not even descend to curiosity. But Janet, who possessed some measure of mental intrepidity, sometimes envied him the human experience. She longed to know what kind of man and woman dwelt there, as in a land apart, and what their crimes were, and their strength and weakness, and how they lived.

That association with them must have disintegrated some of his civilized training she could not but believe, and she wondered if the day might not come on which he would find Fanny's restricted but indomitable rule, and the meagerness of her kingdom, intolerable. But for the moment his remorse and desire for atonement were sincere, and save for a moment or two of exasperation he sought earnestly to meet Fanny's efforts to combine kindness with reason.

"He seems to me nothing but a sweet, wild, undisciplined boy," Janet said to Fanny during one of their conversations upon the topic which had a way of excluding all others.

"He has tried as hard as he could to be good ever since he came back," said Edgar's sister. "But wait till you see him trying as hard as he can to be bad."

It seemed to Janet sad and absurd that such a boy should have come to be so much at odds with life, and lying awake during nights of an obscure restlessness and pain which seemed to be developing in some center of her physical being, she sometimes pictured to herself how it would be to have been a mother with such a boy for her very own: one with such a swift, high spirit, who would do wrong so quickly, and be so eager to atone. She knew that to the mother she could have been, Edgar would have given all his love. As a little boy he would have come to her in the twilight when the day's work and play were over and the boisterous voices of his playmates had fallen into silence, and he would have brought stories of passionate, childish griefs and pleasures. She knew that he must have been the kind of little boy who would respond to tenderness, and the last kiss, and the fairy tales at bedtime.

Had there been any one to love Edgar, the

child, like that? Had he not been often lonely at bedtime and again in the morning when his eyes opened on the empty nursery? His father had been a reserved and inarticulate person whose single outbreak into unreason and passion had come in middle age for the girl he most unsuitably married. If he had felt love for his son, he had not been able to express it.

It might be that such a son would break a mother's heart; but Janet would not have been afraid. The rod could not have controlled him, but she felt that affection could have moved him as with a hairspring. Would the man have been so unstable had the boy been more loved? Yet she knew that sons had often passed from the greatness of a mother's love, to dissipation and crime.

He felt her friendliness, and showed gratitude for it in many ways. Her first request — that he pretend not to dislike her — grew to be a jest between them.

The time came which Fanny judged to be ripe for the beginning of Edgar's discipline. He had stopped coughing and lost his first appealing emaciation, so it was obvious that

he could not be allowed to pass a summer of ease.

One evening a whip-poor-will was calling somewhere in the distance, which was unusual, and Edgar appeared on the outside of the screened door to ask Janet if she would not like to go with him to find it.

"She cannot go. Janet is tired to-night, and I want to speak with you, Edgar."

He came in obediently and seated himself opposite Fanny at her request, to hold a skein of worsted while she wound it into a ball.

"Why are you tired?" he asked Janet.

"I am not," she answered. "It is only Fanny's idea."

And then he listened carefully while his sister talked with much fluency and ability about his future.

The country had once been a famous sheep-raising district, but lack of sufficient water had caused this industry to be abandoned. Why not revive it, for on the Chilworth estate there was plenty of water? Why should not Edgar send for books on sheep and study their ways, and lay out plans, and possibly grounds for

them? Or, if he preferred, he could try agriculture and perhaps a model milk-farm on a large scale.

"I want to do what you want," he said, "provided it is n't something I dislike too much myself." He looked over at Janet mischievously.

"I don't want you to be frivolous about it," answered Fanny with a touch of severity which her brother did not hear, for he was still looking at Janet, who leaned back in an armchair rather listlessly, her face dimmed as though by fatigue or pain.

"You are tired," he said. "You often look tired," he added.

"I am," admitted Janet. "Is n't it silly?"

"I thought you were very strong," said Miss Chilworth.

"I was. I am still. This is only a reaction, I suppose. Don't let us talk about it."

"You must have a tonic," said Fanny. "I know of a good one. Take care! Edgar, you are letting the wool slip."

"You ate only one of my trout for breakfast," persisted the boy, still looking at Janet.

"Is it you who have been getting me trout so often?"

"You told me you would like them."

"Oh, I think you are pretending beautifully!" she exclaimed with an animation which banished the worn look from her face.

"I wish you would n't say that again!" cried Edgar.

"Why not?"

His young face turned to her gravely. "Because it seems as though you really believed it."

"Edgar, you are dropping the wool," cried his sister, "and I have n't the least idea what you two are talking about."

"We will tell you some day," said Janet hastily. She was touched by the boy's feeling and thought that she could not have endured to expose their little secret. Her eyes assured him that she would not, in answer to a quick look of entreaty from his own. "To-night we must talk of cows and sheep," she added.

And her hostess returned to the topic.

"I don't know whether you would like it or not," Fanny said, "but I know you like being

out of doors, and nothing is so healthy for the mind and body as farming."

"We are told it is sometimes hard on the estate," he said.

"So you are taking it lightly—"

"I won't take it lightly," said Edgar with much earnestness. "Whatever I do I intend doing with all my heart."

"That is right," answered his sister, "but you must remember that you do not find it so easy to do as to intend."

Her brother looked quickly down at the worsted and did not reply.

"I suppose you would find more to amuse you in the city," continued Fanny. "But don't you think that for the next few years you might find that the city amused you too much?"

Edgar bent his head still lower as if in shame.

"Don't you think so?" urged Fanny.

There was what seemed to be a very long pause before he murmured, "Yes."

Then he lifted his head and looked at Janet with such an agony of shame in his young eyes that she longed to cry out, "Don't, don't look like that. What you have done was n't so very

bad. You were only a boy, and what you are going to do is good."

After another silence he began to speak in a low voice. "Father was very fond of it up here," he said. "He was one of the first people to come. Don't you believe it would have pleased him to know that the old sheep industry was to be revived on his place?"

"I know it would."

"Then I will do my best to make it go. I will" — he looked up at his sister with a half smile which was very sweet — "I will be a sheep farmer," he said.

CHAPTER VI

In these days Edgar walked eagerly through his new life of reëstablished trust and respectability; but Janet was annoyed that the question of his future should have been decided in such haste.

"I don't like sheep," she told Fanny on the following day. "They are silly creatures, and I don't believe Edgar will like being a sheep farmer."

"It is not wholly a question of what Edgar will like," said his sister. "Edgar has never done anything he did n't like. He has never, voluntarily, endured anything, and that is why he has no strength to resist temptation when it comes. A man who is not strong to endure cannot be strong to resist."

It was with an unexpected pain that Janet admitted the justice of her friend's criticism, but she would not give her approval of sheep.

"If we must endure and sacrifice, why not do these things for something one cares for?

Now I think Edgar would really like to be an architect."

"He used to talk of that, but it would involve city life and the temptations that have already proved his ruin. A country life is the best thing for him, and of course I expect that raising sheep will lead to farming in general. Don't discourage him, Janet, for I see that you influence him, and his future may depend upon the next few months."

So Janet sought to show the interest Edgar evidently expected her to have in his plan, and when he came back from two days in town, where he had gone to buy summer clothes and to get books on his chosen profession, she would have found it impossible not to sympathize with him.

He knocked at her door to tell her that he had come back, and to show her some ties he had bought: were they the right color, the color she suggested? Later on, he made Fanny and herself look at all his new clothes, which he spread out upon the hall furniture till the place looked like a haberdashery. Janet found his eagerness and pleasure singularly winning, but

there seemed to be a great many shirts and ties and suits. She knew that Fanny thought there were too many.

Kneeling on the floor he unpacked books and treatises in considerable number that dealt with the raising of sheep, and held them up for the inspection of his sister and her friend.

"You can't ever say that I don't mean to work when you see these," he said happily.

"I certainly cannot when I find you studying them. But you won't find it a game, Edgar."

"I don't expect to," he answered, and his spirits fell as he gathered up the books to take away.

Janet felt that Miss Chilworth showed some restraint when she did not reproach her brother for the extent of his summer wardrobe, but though her admonition about studying had been reasonable and deserved, Janet wished that she had not uttered it. The boy's swift young spirit was too often chilled by his sister's reason.

But Edgar worked hard over his sheep. He read apparently everything there was to read upon the subject, and though it was lilac time out of doors, and all the bright young leaves seemed to be laughing and clapping their hands

in the pure winds, he read for hours a day in his room. To Janet's suggestion that he should take the books out of doors and work in the fresh air, he said that he could not. "Because out of doors I can't help thinking of other things," he said.

"What things?"

"Fishing and hunting and riding on great plains, and sometimes the cry of a coyote in the night, and sometimes the howl of a wolf."

A month earlier, when she had dropped from the shining and roaring of a Pullman express into the silence of spring woods, and seen a slim, young moon, and heard the hylas calling from marshlands, Janet had been surprised to find herself a little glad and thrilled by the moment's freedom from civilized things. She would not have thought herself capable of understanding a man's longing for rough, strong, dangerous life. But much had changed since then. The slim moon with its pale, sweet shining, had come into splendor and waned and grown thin: Edgar reported its last setting from a ledge on the mountain-side where he had passed the night. And Edgar himself had come bringing more change than could ever have been brought

by the waning of a moon or the passing of a springtime. So she understood his hunger for the plains and the sound of a coyote crying through the night.

That hour when he had come suddenly out of the mists, a stormy and almost despairing creature, her sympathies had sprung to meet him, and since that other hour when she had sat with him by the trout stream, and he had looked at her and become conscious of her for the first time, he had not often left her mind. She felt there was nothing that she could not understand about him, even to those cravings for the dangerous, possibly evil things, such as had been his undoing in the past. She knew that he would always be a stranger to moderation, that generous and violent emotions moved swiftly within him. She saw in his face and heard in his voice many things that he had not otherwise expressed or given evidence of. She knew the way in which he would love a woman, the adoration and worship which he would bring her, and the way he would kneel by her and speak and look if she were ill. She had not seen him care deeply for any one, either

as son, brother, or lover; but she knew that the power of caring greatly was there.

She saw him humbled, willing if not eager to admit his faults, but she knew that he had a high and dangerous temper. When with him she felt as though a sixth sense enabled her to divine what he was. Never before had the spirit of a human being been so easily recognized by her, or so quickly signaled and joined. Never before had she moved through the days with a human creature who seemed so entirely hers. She could soon control his moods as one moves the stops of an organ.

If he was irritated, she could make him smile; if his head or his heart ached, she could make him forget; and she found this intimacy with him the most precious thing that had come into her life. But it did not bring her peace.

That he should grow restive under his sister's rule was inevitable, and when he had digested everything there seemed to be learned about the equipment necessary for a sheep farm, discussion began as to how much money it was expedient to spend. Edgar wanted what his sister considered extravagant.

"It would be absurd to sink much money in a farm that Edgar has not yet proved himself sufficiently earnest or steadfast to care for," said Miss Chilworth, with much evidence of reason.

Edgar was disappointed and resentful. He even began to neglect his work, and it became evident to Janet that he would have what he wanted in one way or take it in another. He spoke of buying a tennis racquet, and playing at the Club which a fashionable summer colony had built by the lake, and Fanny complained bitterly of his liking for certain persons whom she called "low," such as James the assistant chauffeur. On several occasions Edgar had taken the boy to fish with him in the mountain brook, and offered him cigarettes from his private supply.

"What, exactly, do you mean by 'low'?" asked Janet, who resented Fanny's attitude toward human beings born in a social class other than her own.

"Don't be foolish," answered Miss Chilworth. "You know perfectly what I mean, and it's not only that I must get Edgar away from

all association with such people as he has been with during the last year, but that he is interfering with my work and destroying the standards of my household." And she went on to say that she had experienced difficulties little short of superhuman in the training of James, and had only just succeeded in correcting his manners till they expressed in a proper degree that inferiority to herself which was obvious from his clothes, speech, and situation. By treating him with familiarity Edgar would ruin him.

Janet tried to think that Fanny was right in the matter of James, and she was able to see that interference with carefully planned work by any one, particularly the boy who had proved himself to be an unworthy son and brother, must be annoying to Miss Chilworth; but this first offense seemed a little thing. There remained also the question of the tennis racquet to which Fanny attached undue importance. It was in her eyes that dreadful thing known as the "entering wedge" which was to open a life of disintegrating pleasures to her brother.

"You do not know Edgar as I do," said

Edgar's sister, which Janet admitted might well be true, though she was not sure how well Fanny had ever known him. She began to dread the arrival of the tennis racquet and the discussions which would follow, for she was one of those for whom personal unpleasantness holds something of poison, and she looked with envy upon the strong spirits who appear to thrive upon attack and resentment, and navigate ably among waters of social strife. She admitted that Fanny was right in her determination that Edgar must work hard before he could win back a position that he had forfeited by wrongdoing and weakness. But did Fanny possess those graces of sympathy and understanding which were necessary to win and hold him?

Then Janet told herself that she was doubtless a foolish woman. Any man would tell her that it was moonshine to talk of the graces of sympathy and understanding. What the boy needed was a strong hand that held no compromise. And such a hand was that of Fanny Chilworth. It would not voluntarily compromise even in the matter of a tennis racquet.

CHAPTER VII

JANET first saw the thing on a hall table as she passed in to dinner, and it gave her something of that feeling which is called a "sinking of the heart," for on that day Fanny was seriously annoyed with her brother, who had again taken James to fish in the mountain brook and brought him home half an hour late to his work. Miss Chilworth reiterated her belief that Edgar would spoil him, and gave Janet another vivid account of the difficulties she had experienced in persuading the boy to take off his hat when spoken to by his employer.

It seemed unfortunate that the tennis racquet should have arrived at that time and been boldly displayed, with all its potentialities of evil, where Fanny also could see it on her way to the evening meal.

Edgar was asked at once if he thought his duties would allow time for tennis, and he replied with equal promptness that his duties allowed him Saturday afternoons off, during which time he intended playing at the Club with

Johnny Stone. It might also be that, as the Stones had a private court and no religious prejudices, he would play with them on Sundays also. His tone was expressive of a barely concealed exasperation at Fanny's question. And now it could be seen that Miss Chilworth sought to be kind and reasonable.

"I love to have you contented," she said, "but I am only afraid that if you have too good a time at the Club you will lose your interest in what you have to do here."

"I don't know what reason you have for saying that," replied Edgar. "Could any one show more interest in sheep than I have?"

"No—"

"Could any one have worked harder than I have?"

"No, but—"

"I am tired of 'buts,'" said the boy. "How do you expect a fellow to work if you show no confidence in him?"

Fanny's answer came with swiftness and anger. "It is only with time that you can deserve confidence."

"I intend to work and do right, if you don't

force me the wrong way — but I don't intend living entirely in a convent."

Neither brother nor sister spoke again during the meal.

There was gloom and anger about the pretty, candlelit table, and Janet ceased to be capable of eating the excellent things that were served upon it. Fanny's face was stern; Edgar's was sullen, and occasionally furious; but neither seemed to suffer a diminution of appetite. Janet despised herself as a weakling; but was surprisingly unhappy because Edgar only looked at her once, and then with hostility which seemed to place her with his sister as an enemy.

There was no comfort for her while the brother and sister disputed; and there was danger in such disputes, which Janet felt like a cold hand upon her heart. The boy's future seemed to hang upon his immediate relations to Fanny, and it seemed perverse of life to have placed him — with his fecund nature, his high, dangerous ardors and passions — under the control of a woman with inelastic sympathies. If sufficiently irritated, it was probable that Edgar

would refuse submission, and yield to the impulses which destroy orderly living, for it was impossible to look at his future without considering his past and facing his tendencies to wildness and passion.

Dinner was barely over when he rose and went stormily out of the house. It was as though he had left a trail of sulphur behind him.

"So my house is a convent!" Fanny said angrily. "I don't know how I am to endure this."

Then Miss Chilworth and her guest sat together on the terrace in the calm twilight. The brilliancy and splendor of a young summer earth was softened. The mountain, dim and remote, seemed to dream of summer nights and moons and stars. A breeze that had been among the flowers of a newly watered garden drifted to them and away, — but the sulphur trail that Edgar had made lingered in the minds of the two women.

Janet knew that the evening was beautiful, but she saw it with an alien consciousness. She told herself that the whole thing was much ado about nothing. Fanny's attitude was ridiculous.

It was no wonder that Edgar, who belonged to the sex that finds it hard to endure, should grow impatient. But Edgar was wrong too. Brother and sister were both wrong, and in such widely divergent ways that Janet felt that a common existence was impossible to them. But if so, what of Edgar? Her spiritual preoccupation was all for saving the boy, for protecting him against himself and Fanny's tactlessness, and for some day showing him brilliantly successful to a world that now refused to believe in him. She was a childless woman, and all the tentacles of potential motherhood, curiously mixed with feeling more directly personal, had fastened themselves upon him, involving her so deeply in his welfare that there were moments when she longed for deliverance, and wished that she had never come to live under Fanny Chilworth's roof.

And now Fanny was saying, "I told you that if Edgar came our peace would go."

"You told me the truth," answered Janet.

She was seated with every appearance of comfort in the deep, cushioned space of a wicker lounging-chair, and was hot and resentful be-

cause neither physical comfort nor enjoyment of the lovely hour was possible to her. She wished that Fanny would not speak of Edgar, though it was obviously impossible to speak of anything else.

"This is probably the beginning of the end," said Edgar's sister, with an exasperated edge to her voice, and she sat very tense and straight on the edge of a swinging couch. "It is the beginning of the end. I have watched him growing irritable and discontented for a week, and now he is going to be friendly again with Johnny Stone, who was one of that dissipated set of young men in college who were responsible for most of his trouble."

Janet answered that he must have friends when he had nothing but sheep to think about.

"Janet!" Miss Chilworth reproached her.

"He was unreasonably violent just now," Janet admitted.

"He is always unreasonably violent."

"Oh, no, Fanny. Sometimes he is just a dear, sorrowful, repentant child. And when he is trying very hard to be good, his face looks like that of a Sir Galahad on his quest for the Grail.

If he were not so often that, one would not be so sorry when he is — the other things. The trouble is that the atmosphere about him is the unalloyed feminine. There should be a man — a brother or a friend wiser than himself — to influence Edgar just now. We want to understand and sympathize, but we can't, any more than men could understand a willful, violent, sensitive girl."

"But what am I to do, Janet? It is unkind of you to imply that in some way I am not doing my duty."

"I am not implying such a thing. Now it is you who are unreasonable."

"But what would you do in my place?"

"I don't honestly think that the tennis racquet is of any importance. I think it will be a good thing for him to play with friends of his own age, but if I were his sister, and feared pleasure for him as you, perhaps rightly, have learned to do, I should probably be very foolish, and put my arms about his neck and say, 'Perhaps I am an old goose, but please don't have too good a time at the Club because I am so afraid — and I care so much.'"

"It would be ridiculous," said Fanny, "to treat Edgar in any such way. A man of his obstinacy needs something stronger than pleading."

"But if there were also love?"

"I cannot love Edgar," said his sister bitterly. "He himself has made that impossible, even if his very cause for being were not a thing which blurred my dearest memories. Besides, he needs something stronger than love."

"What is stronger?"

"The faults of his nature." Fanny paused before continuing more quietly. "You are a very sweet woman, Janet. You are a more gentle woman than I could ever be, but I fear you must be often imposed upon."

"Perhaps," said Janet, pushing back the hair from her forehead with a weary gesture. "Papa was like that. He was imposed upon, but he was more kind than I, a great deal more kind. Just before his death we had a new coachman and he was drunk the first time he drove, nearly tipping papa over at the crossroads. I was furious when I heard of it, and sent the man back to town without letting him stop for his

supper. But papa caught him before he left, and gave him some food, and talked to him behind the lilac bush when I was not looking. He pleaded with him for his wife and children, entreating him to pull himself up while there was time, and offered to help him. The wretch listened without a word till papa was through, and then he said, 'You are a good man.' And the tears came into his eyes. 'You are a good man — a good man,' he repeated as he walked away. Papa told me about it afterwards, and we hunted him up to find that he had been arrested for drunkenness the very night he left us."

"There!" cried Fanny triumphantly. "It was lovely of your father," she added more gently. "But you see, Janet, love and kindness are not enough."

"It seems not," answered Janet, heavily and wearily. "It seems that people must learn from life that fire and flood will destroy them. And many of them must be half destroyed before they learn, and then it is often too late. There are others who can never learn."

"Exactly! But if they break the rules they suffer."

"There must be some for whom it would be enough that they make some one else suffer."

"You mean Edgar." Fanny paused before continuing. "I see that you are your father's daughter. But, Janet, if many of us were like him, where would the world be?"

"Where is it now with so very few like him?"

Fanny took refuge in a platitude.

"These are deep and complex questions," she said.

Janet was learning that mentally this distinguished and able woman was capable of little else than platitudes and had ceased to feel surprise at them. Just now she did not hear. An immense melancholy had taken the place of her resentment, and her voice, as she spoke broodingly through the gathering darkness, was heavy and sad.

"I wonder why people are made like that," she asked, as though of herself. "I wonder why people are made so that they must suffer, so that they must be beaten and bruised by life before they submit to its laws. I wonder why they are made so that we cannot help them."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Saturday came, Edgar was allowed to go to the Club without protest, and on Sunday he again went up the mountain; but this time with Johnny Stone and his week-end party.

"I don't like Johnny Stone as a friend for Edgar," said Miss Chilworth. "But I would rather he went with him than with James. The Stones are at least in Edgar's own class of life."

Janet thought that Edgar would have been safer with the farmer's son. Though the worst that could be said of Johnny was that he played high and drank hard, this was the very worst, so far as Edgar was concerned, that could be said of any one.

"I cannot bear the Stones," she said, with some heat. "I should be sorry to think that I belonged to the same class of anything that they did. Now, don't tell me that Mrs. Stone's mother was a Biddle or something of Philadelphia because I don't care who she was. What the girls are is enough. I don't believe they live for anything but to get their 'crowd' together

and make as much noise as possible. Their amusements are farcical. If a bell rings one of them will begin to caper like a negro in a cake-walk, and think it fun. And they all shriek over anything that is rather silly and not quite proper. Do you remember the evening that we found the Misses Stone prancing about the lawn in pink mosquito netting in imitation of 'La Loie' Fuller, because they had not been able to organize any other form of entertainment, and how they afterwards dressed in a hurry and ordered out the automobiles to rush them to town in time for the New York 'midnight'? Oh, I detest the Stones!"

Fanny laughed. "Why, Janet, I did n't know you could be so vicious."

"Neither did I." Janet threw herself on the sofa with a gesture at once weary and exasperated.

"I sometimes think that you are not well," continued Fanny seriously.

"And I am beginning to think so too. I don't know what the trouble is, but I suppose I shall soon have to find out. But don't let us talk of it."

"We must talk of it," said Fanny firmly, and looked at her friend with real concern. "Let me take you up to town next week."

"Oh, I don't want to go," cried Janet. "We will wait a few days, at any rate, and see if I feel better."

Edgar was late for breakfast on Monday morning, and became sullen under his sister's questioning. He admitted to having stayed late at the Stones' for a game of cards, which gave Fanny reason for saying to her guest, "You see how right I was." Janet was discouraged and slightly exasperated. She wanted peace, and under the roof with Edgar there was none.

His intrusion into the next twenty-four hours of her life was both stormy and sweet. A north-east wind came in the night and brought a chilly rain with it. The landscape was hidden much as it had been on that early spring day which saw Edgar's return to his father's home, and now, somewhat as then, Janet saw him come in through the terrace door, wet and cold, in his working clothes. He passed her without speaking, on his way to a closet in which he sought rubber boots.

"It is foolish to put rubber boots over wet stockings," said Janet, who was reading before an open fire. "And it is foolish to look as if you were cross with me."

Edgar turned to her quickly.

"I am not cross with you. I could n't be."

"Then come to the library fire and dry your feet."

He followed her and crouched by the flame, putting his feet to the blaze as she commanded. When she laid her hand on his back to see if his shirt was wet, he looked at her with shy, grateful eyes, seeming humble and happy to have her take care of him. Janet found herself unnecessarily happy in doing so.

"You are a foolish boy to get your shirt so wet."

"Let me dry it here."

"You're a foolish boy in many ways."

"I know. It's my temper. But I do want to do right, I do. Only it seems as if Fanny tried to make it hard. It seems as though she did not want to believe."

And then he told her of his discouragements and angers.

He did not think he should ever care for sheep farming, and how could a fellow be expected to live alone with sheep and his sister! Fanny did n't like it if he made friends with an uneducated boy. She did n't like it if he played with friends of his own kind. What did she expect him to do? She did n't like it if he used her automobile. She would n't buy him one for himself. When he tried to take all the interest he could in his work, and made plans for something new and big, she dropped cold water on them. She refused to trust his ideas, though he had spent the whole of one hot evening trying to explain them to her. Fanny was "rotten rich" and had always had her own way since she was born, and thought no one existed in the world who had n't been born of or near a Chilworth. He despised Fanny. Sometimes he almost hated her.

"Hush! Let me feel your shoulder to see if it is dry."

Under the pressure of her hand he was suddenly quiet again.

"I could n't stay — I could n't put it through if it were not for you."

"Your left shoulder is quite wet still. Turn round."

He did as she told him and then she sought to make out a case for Fanny. There was much to be said for her and Janet dwelt upon her desire to do right, the many sacrifices of independence she had already made for her brother, the irritation she must inevitably suffer when her carefully thought-out plans of life were upset by one who despised them.

Edgar asked: "What plans of life?"

"Why, — plans for guarding and improving her properties, for training those who work for her."

"Humph!"

"Why do you say 'humph'?"

"Because I don't call that life at all, and neither do you."

Janet said that it was a kind of life.

"It is a poor kind."

In her heart Janet thought Fanny rather a stupid and inelastic person, who was often kind and always strove honestly to do right. From this angle Miss Chilworth was rather pathetic, and Janet strove to make Edgar see her

so. She showed him also where his sister was right in insisting that he prove his capacity for sustained effort, for self-controlled and sober living. "It is the only way to make and prove yourself a man," she said.

Edgar knelt on by the fireside long after his clothes were dry and grew happy and reasonable under her influence, willing to see where Fanny was right, willing to admit where he was wrong, and looking at Janet now and then with eloquent, shining eyes that were amazingly submissive and a little shy.

She knew also that he was one to whom life would always be a radiant or a terrible thing. Never would he walk through it gradually with consideration of reason or moderate ways. And Janet was full of fear for him.

Suddenly he rose and left her, to return swiftly with a portfolio of drawings which he spread upon her knees.

"I did these yesterday when I should have been working," he explained breathlessly. "I heard a Western State was going to have a new university, and the idea of it gripped me so that I could not shake it off. I could n't — You

know I always wanted to be an architect. What do you think?"

Janet looked at them a little breathless also, for she saw that the things had strength and beauty in spite of their crudity, and they explained him, while they made her fear for him even more. The boy had talent, if not a divine touch of something stronger, and this winglike something would make his irresponsibility an irreparable matter.

It was absurd to think that the possession of such a talent could be shut up on a sheep farm.

Janet did not tell him this, but promised to show his work where it could be judged. And that night she lay awake again. Edgar was growing shy in her presence, conscious of things that he could not say, and she knew that he was beginning to care for her as men care for women.

She felt that the love of this boy would be more sweet than any that had been yet offered her, and to pass through it and away from it would be an emotional experience such as she did not care to accept.

Edgar would be as sure to go from her to the

youthful face that mated his own as she found that he was certain to come to her if she so willed it. To love her would be no misfortune for him. It would inspire him to high effort at a period when he needed to be so inspired, and before he could suffer very seriously from being denied, he would forget her.

She was willing that this summer, which had seemed to promise her peace, should be troubled by him, but there was a degree beyond which she was unwilling that her life should be bereft by Edgar: she would not allow him to imagine himself in love with her. She would not allow him the joy of dallying with an immortal thing during summer days, of pouring it into the empty cup of her life only to spill it lightly, leaving her with surpassingly bitter dregs.

He had the charm of all radiant perilous creatures, but it was not to such as Edgar that Janet had dreamed of giving her love, and the pain that she would feel when he left her could not be the dislocation of her entire being, which the loss of her very soul's comrade would bring to pass. But care for the boy filled her lonely heart as nothing else had filled it. His affection

and dependence warmed places in her life that had been bleak. Physically and emotionally she felt unequal to further suffering and told herself that it would be better to part from him now, at a time of her choosing, than later at a time of his own.

She had brought him out of his first despair, and saw him with his face set toward success. His sister's hand was strong; hers, when it came to discipline, was lamentably weak, and she knew it would be more likely to caress than coerce. Moreover, Edgar had his gift. Until seeing the drawings Janet had not guessed that he possessed a talent which might bring him independence. She must see that his ability had a chance of recognition and then — should she not open her hands and let him go?

CHAPTER IX

When Janet, seeking to gain time and vision, made herself slightly inaccessible to Edgar, he showed bewilderment and pique. It was perhaps because of this that he passed several evenings at the Stones', and Miss Chilworth said: —

"You see how it is, Janet. He is growing tired of his work, and this is the beginning of the end."

"It is absurd to talk so," answered Janet. "Cannot a man work and spend evenings with his friends?"

"And it is absurd to talk as though Edgar were an ordinary man, and the Stones, ordinary friends. He has probably gone to see that pretty Southern girl who is visiting them. They are all going up the mountain to-night."

Janet was lying upon the sofa.

"What more natural?" she asked, but turned her face away. She wanted to be with Edgar upon the mountain, to try the strength of her own charm against that of the Southern girl, and make him hers in defiance of age and reason.

The craving passed through her conscious being like the lick of a flame, and left her spent, ashamed, and a little afraid. For one moment she knew that she had been possessed by something elemental and destructive. It had seemed as though she could not breathe unless she had the boy's love. She had realized that Edgar might bring her more suffering than she was willing to face, but not till this moment had she found that she might suffer in this personal, convulsive way.

A future between herself and this boy there could not be. Sooner or later he would go from her, either to the normal life that she hoped for him, or to slip back into disgrace. In either case she would suffer more than she could endure to think of.

Ten years ago she would have had more hardihood. With unstrained nerves and ignorance of life's amazing capacity for pain, she would not have turned aside from dangerous adventure. But now, having learned from life, being rather bruised and disillusioned by it, she lay upon Miss Chilworth's comfortable sofa with her face turned to the wall and asked her-

self why she should stop in the way of suffering; why she should deliberately lie down in the path of the steam-roller and allow its iron and flame to pass over her.

An increasing physical trouble, as to the nature of which the physician's daughter had a shrewd suspicion, could be used as her means of escape. It would be obviously impossible for her to intrude upon Fanny to the extent of being seriously ill in her house, and once in town, under care of a physician, it would be easy to stay there. So while her hostess suggested plans for Janet's physical welfare, Janet continued silently to make them for her own spiritual peace.

But that night she dreamed that some strange and dreadful force held her by the hair, and when she tried to escape, the hair would not break, but wrenched and tore her so that the pain could not be endured, and she was forced by very agony to be still and bow her head. When she awoke, an impression of being in the grip of something she could not control remained with her until she had breakfasted and spoken with Fanny and seen the actual world of sunshine.

In the late afternoon she sat exhausted upon the terrace after a struggle with the weeds of her pansy bed. Rain of the day before had caused them to flourish alarmingly, and she had been ashamed of the physical fatigue resulting from this attack upon them.

Finding her there Edgar was troubled by her pallor.

"You must n't do such hard work," he said. "Let me do it for you."

"But I have always taken care of a garden. It's only this summer that I can't manage it. I suppose I'm out of training, and that is why it gives me pains."

"Where are the pains?"

"They are healthy pains."

"You don't look as if they were healthy. You look dreadfully ill."

She sought to turn his attention from herself to a short visit that he had contemplated making among sheep-grazing districts. "You can make up your mind how you really feel about it," she said, "and if you will leave all your designs to me, I will make up my mind how I feel about them, and then we can see what is best to do."

This suggestion that he go away evidently hurt him, and he was quick to notice the reserve born of her wish to detach her life from his.

Ultimately he yielded to her wish and showed some pride and spirit in meeting her change of mood. But when he had said good-bye to her, and she had gone to her room, he came back, seeing her in the window. His pride was forgotten, and the upturned face was bewildered and sorrowful.

"Are you offended about anything?"

"No, no, you foolish boy!"

He turned swiftly then and went away. She had laughed, but tears were on her face, because his own had seemed so defenseless under that laughter.

It was no longer possible for her to fear the girl from the South who had camped with Edgar on the mountain-side; but she feared herself because of that smothering moment when it had seemed as though she could not live without possessing his love.

CHAPTER X

It was soon afterwards that there came to Janet a letter from Gerald Stanton announcing his proposed arrival at the village boarding house.

Janet had not been wholly unmoved by Mr. Stanton in the past, and it seemed not only fair, but wise, to allow him another chance of moving her more deeply if, as seemed probable, he again cared to do so.

Fanny was interested by the announcement of Mr. Stanton's arrival, and between Janet and herself there ensued some of the pleasant companionship that had been interrupted by the many irritations resulting from Edgar's presence. They discussed such details as what to wear and what to eat when he came to dine. Janet even had difficulty in dissuading her friend from asking him to stay at her house instead of at the boarding place, where the only really good thing to eat was a corned-beef hash of some local renown.

Janet was too human not to be warmed by

the older woman's growing affection for herself. Miss Chilworth's nature was not a luxuriant one, and there was something rather pathetic in the timid and unaccustomed acts of tenderness she showed her guest. Both women desired earnestly to do right, and did not care to live for social excitement, — a similarity of nature which is excellent soil for friendship to sprout upon. But Janet knew that she could never love Fanny.

Neither was it at present thinkable that she could love Mr. Stanton, though Fanny evidently expected it of her, and appeared to refrain with difficulty from asking intimate questions concerning her actual relations with him.

Dressing herself for his arrival, Janet experienced no more than an echo of that excitement which is natural to a woman on the arrival of a man by whom she knows herself to be loved. And when he had come she found herself liking him less than usual.

Yet Gerald Stanton was thoroughly likable. He was possessed of a pleasant humor, a direct and simple manhood, a vigorous body, a healthy mind and emotional system, and had

advanced to the early middle age of his life with success. It was inevitable that one so well balanced, so well trained, and of such financial acumen should succeed. His income was large and as assured as an income may be. He had worked hard to make it so, and now, in the full power of his manhood, he wished to enjoy it with the woman who of all others stirred his imagination and was able to wake life into something almost magical.

But Mr. Stanton meant nothing of magic to this woman. The faint thrills stirred by his coming ceased as she looked at him under the lamplight, perceiving that he was growing stout, and that his hair was perceptibly thin on the temples.

She found in his perfectly groomed person, so suggestive of success and security, something that irritated her. That a man should be so inevitably successful seemed to show that he could know nothing of the spirited, dangerous impulses that come from God knows what strange lands that are over the rim of our visible world. Was he not in fact rather an opaque person to whom the winds of spring brought

no discontent, and through whose being there could move no pageant of change, of great lights or darkness? Janet had not thought of missing these things before, but she missed them now and watched with increasingly critical eyes the man who would marry her. Yes, he was an opaque person, and she could not blame herself for being conscious of it; but it seemed rather cruel that she should like him less for growing stout and for a perceptible increase in baldness. It was rather cruel and inconsistent also, for the time was at hand when the blighting hand of age would be upon herself.

Looking at Gerald Stanton Janet saw Edgar's face instead, and being a thoroughly self-conscious woman, she knew that it was because of what Edgar was that she saw so clearly what Gerald was not. Edgar was the kind of man that women love, and Janet knew that she could have loved him had his nature possessed more of steadfastness and been passed through the developing years that could make it a mate for her own.

Before the hour when Mr. Stanton could

reasonably be expected to say good-night, Miss Chilworth found a pretext to leave the room in spite of Janet's signals to the contrary. She did not want this man to speak to her again of love, and a certain ominous quiet, the deliberation with which he pinched out the embers of his cigarette and laid it in the ash tray as though preparing for an encounter, told her that he was about to do so.

She rose and walked to the French window, which was open, though a wire screen was closed against night insects.

Gerald rose and followed her. "Shall we go out?" he asked.

Janet demurred. "There are so many mosquitoes." She stood turned from him pressing her palms against the screen and leaning her forehead on the backs of her hands as she looked out into the darkness. The light from the room illumined the back of her soft hair and the graceful lines of her white dress; but the other half of her remained in heavy shadow, and her profile was dim and mysterious as it turned persistently to a world of immeasurable darkness.

"You have changed," said Gerald Stanton, and his voice was sharp and short because it hurt him that he could not touch her.

She neither answered nor stirred.

"I do not like the change," he said.

"I am sorry," she answered gently, and in her gentleness she seemed far away.

"The last time I saw you you gave me hope."

"I said that I would try." She paused.

A little breeze came in and stirred the folds of her lace; an owl called suddenly in the valley, and from the mountain came a faint, far answer.

"Are you trying?"

"No," she said, even more gently.

"And may I ask why not?"

"It would not be of any use."

"I will not accept this," he answered. "It is ridiculous to be sure of such a thing. Unless—" He paused. "What are you looking at out there?" he asked quickly.

"Nothing."

Her quiet and aloofness maddened him. He took a step nearer to her.

"I will not accept this unless you love some one else."

She did not answer.

"Do you?"

"No."

And still she did not stir. Her profile remained dim, sweet, and soft in the gloom. He had never seen her so motionless.

A night owl called again from the valley, and as though the wildness of the sound roused something in her, she suddenly felt it to be sad and absurd that life should send her only men whom she could not love. Assuredly it was not because she cared for Gerald Stanton that, in this moment and while standing by his side, she was suddenly and deeply conscious of her own potentialities for loving, and was filled with a violent exasperation against the stupidity of things.

CHAPTER XI

JANET was hunting buds in her pansy bed when Mr. Stanton had himself announced the next morning, and as she rose to enter the house she came face to face with Edgar.

He was roughly dressed as though for camping, in a shirt that was open at the throat, and through which the lines of his young chest and shoulders showed with splendid freedom. Janet could have laughed because he was so exactly like the pictures that are given us of men who live hardily and dangerously upon the plains of our great West.

But his expression was not one of hardihood as he stood between her and the house, boyishly fingering the leaves of a copper beech tree, and wearing the questioning face of a child who has been hurt, and wonders if he is to be hurt again. She saw that he was thinking of the unaccountable estrangement of their last hours together. He seemed to be asking and hoping something from her, and she gave it to him with a smile out of which it was

impossible to keep her happiness at seeing him there.

"I am so glad you are back," she said.

His expression changed swiftly to one of astonishing radiance.

"I just arrived. I saw you from my window and came at once. I had to come."

The last words were so low that she could pretend not to hear them. She wanted to exclaim inconsequently, "Oh, is n't it a heavenly day!" but instead of this she asked, "Did you have a successful time?"

"Yes, and I have hundreds of things to tell you, and some more sketches to show."

"I had no idea you were coming back so soon."

"Neither had I — when I went. I wished you had been along. You don't mind my saying so, do you?"

"Why should I mind?"

"I don't know. You were changed before I went away. I thought about it a lot. I could n't understand. The reason I came down so quickly just now was because I wanted to know if you had changed back again."

Janet laughed, not because what he said was funny, but because she was suddenly happy and at rest to have him with her and to find that it was no longer possible or sensible to pretend that she was not his friend. They walked together toward the house with their intimate comradeship reëstablished suddenly and mysteriously, without any volition of hers. She did not reason or fear or evade as in the past, and the world seemed suddenly just right and peaceful.

Fanny came over the lawn to meet them with a troubled brow, because she had not expected Edgar so soon, and was not prepared for him.

He flung his arm about her neck with unusual affection as he kissed her, and said he did not care what was prepared, he was so glad to be at home again. Then he walked on with her, and Janet heard him laugh suddenly as though the snapping of a spring had released his capacity for mirth.

How foolish and like a bad dream had been her effort to deny her fondness for Edgar! It had done violence to herself, and to life,—which

does not tolerate such subterfuges. The falseness of it had put her days out of gear. Something had been wrong with the summer hours, because she had denied her friendship to this boy who asked for it. He was only a boy and it was utterly right and natural that he should come to her at once from his journey with "hundreds" of things to tell.

A song sparrow was dashing exquisite little splashes of music into the sunlit air and Janet became conscious of it for the first time that morning.

To Mr. Stanton, waiting for her in the house, she showed a more kind and rested countenance than that of the night before, and she greeted him sweetly if with a certain vagueness. He was composed; but definitely unhappy, as he sat opposite her by the now lifeless fireplace of the library.

"I have just told Miss Chilworth that I must cut short my visit and leave by the afternoon train," he said. "But I do not want you to misunderstand me. I am not going because I have given up; but I had hoped so much from this visit and have found so little, that for the

moment it will be more comfortable for me to be away from you."

"It will be better for you to give up," said Janet, in a voice that strove not to be unkind.

"Permit me to decide this for myself. I should like, however, to understand more clearly just in what way you have changed toward me."

Janet looked out of the window where the sun shone against a lattice of green leaves, and tried to collect her thoughts for the sincere answering of Mr. Stanton's question. She knew that his brevity and dryness of speech sought to cover a pain which was clearly seen in his blue eyes, but she was conscious of not being sorry enough for him.

Before she answered he spoke again sharply. "Will you be kind enough not to look out of the window," he said. "Will you listen to me?" He realized with an added weight of pain that during his last interview with her she had constantly looked from him into the world beyond doors and windows, as though it held something that occupied her spirit.

She turned to him quickly penitent for her neglect. "There was a time when I thought

there might be happiness for both of us if I married you, even if I did not love you. Now I do not think so; I could not make you happy."

"I must care for my own happiness," he said.

"And I," said Janet, "must care for mine."

"You could trust it with me."

"I could not trust it to any one on this earth — not even myself, perhaps."

"With yourself least of all."

"I wonder —" she paused and looked away from him again.

"I know. Janet, you are homeless, your days have no object. You have no one to do for. There is no one to do for you. As my wife — Janet!" He bent toward her and there were tears in his eyes.

She shook her head and there were tears in her own.

"I cannot," she said; "it is no use, I cannot. Oh, I am sorry to hurt you! Why must people be hurt so often?"

Mr. Stanton leaned back and brushed his forehead with his hand. "You are in a very strange mood," he said; "but as it does not seem to be a mood that leads to me, I will go

away and wait till it passes. Please understand that waiting is one of my strong points."

They rose, and now it seemed socially necessary to speak of something else, for the voices of Fanny and Edgar were heard outside and Mr. Stanton was too punctilious to leave without thanking Miss Chilworth for her hospitality.

"Who is the young fellow with her?" he asked indifferently of Janet, as she went with him to the door which opened to the terrace.

"Her brother."

"A good-looking boy, but I hear he is no good. It must be trying to have him about. Drinks or gambles, does n't he?"

"He is trying not to," said Janet. "It seems shamefully easy for one human being to say that another is 'no good.'" She spoke with sudden anger and pain, which Mr. Stanton failed to notice because of his bitter preoccupation.

Miss Chilworth came to meet him, and when he had thanked her for her kindness, he went away as he had planned, and was seen no more at "Green Acres."

His depression had been very patent, and

Fanny told Janet that it seemed a pity, "for he is a fine fellow with a good business. A woman would be safe with him," she said.

But Janet thought otherwise. "I don't believe I am a safe person," she said, and asked impatiently why she should marry him if she did not want to. There seemed no reason why she should, and the argument fell. She was still angry with Mr. Stanton for his careless words about Edgar, and her maternal instinct rose passionately in defense of the boy.

She wished that Fanny would go away so that he could be with her, and perhaps take her out in the car and drive over the hills while he told her of all that had happened since he left.

But Janet was not to drive with Edgar over the hills on that day or on the next. Without a word of explanation to his sister or his friend, he had left the house for a period and place unknown.

CHAPTER XII

DURING the next day, which brought no news of Edgar, Fanny's habitual resentment against him increased.

"We live," she said dryly, "upon manly adventure. Has he had an accident? Is he dead upon the mountain-side, or in a temper somewhere because I hoped he would not have to leave the place soon again, or gambling and drinking with the Stones?"

"Or performing some extraordinary piece of work for the sheep?" asked Janet. "You must admit, Fanny, that my hypothesis is quite as likely as your own."

But Janet herself was bewildered. It seemed impossible to find the clue to his departure, for which he had not prepared himself even by the taking of a toothbrush. His going seemed without reason; it seemed wrong in view of his responsibilities; and the following morning, when the Stones' motor arrived with a message, sent through the chauffeur, that Mr. Chilworth

wanted his "things," Fanny's resentment and Janet's bewilderment increased.

"What does he mean by 'things,'" asked his sister, "a fishing-rod or an evening coat? I shall send him nothing; let him come and take what he wants."

Janet extracted information from the chauffeur to the extent of convincing her that Edgar intended to pass Sunday with the Stones, and that he might not be expected at home again for some days. She secretly conveyed this knowledge to Annie, the Irish maid who had expressed a willingness to be cut in little pieces for "Mr. Edgar."

So Edgar got his "things," though Janet felt that he did not deserve them. She was hurt and astounded that he should have left in such a way after that five minutes of eager happiness which followed his return to her. It made the world bleak to find that she meant so little to him. Was the boy unstable as water? Was he, after all, "no good," as Mr. Stanton had said?

Sunday was a gloriously brilliant day, with the mountain blue and vague through the haze of a high southwest wind. Trees of shimmering

green raiment bent and tossed and flashed in it. It was one of the winds that sweep mightily over high lands, and it grew as the day passed.

Miss Chilworth, with her guest, sought a refuge from it in the corner of the piazza, where they gave little heed to its splendor, but struggled with the scattering leaves of the Sunday paper, and with a billowing rug that rose in huge bubbles about their feet.

To talk more of Edgar seemed intolerable, and yet it was obviously impossible to talk of anything else. The incivility, the caprice of his act were too significant of indifference to things upon which his future depended.

"Are you sure, Fanny, that you did not say anything to anger him before he left?"

"What should I have said? Really, Janet, one would suppose you thought everything was my fault!"

As she spoke Miss Chilworth stepped forward quickly to rescue a chair which was blowing across the piazza on its way to a disastrous plunge among the shrubbery, and Janet put her hands to her head.

"Oh, this dreadful wind!" she cried. "It

makes me feel as though I could not endure or understand anything."

"If you end by enduring or understanding Edgar, with or without wind, you will be doing well," said Edgar's sister.

"Is n't it because we are not used to living with men that the ways of this one seem so strange to us?" suggested Janet. "We are, perhaps, exaggerating the importance of his going away like this. Our fathers lived moderately because they were old; but I imagine that women with brothers and husbands and sons are often waiting, and wondering, and fearing. Is the man or boy lost on his pleasure boat? or at the North Pole? or in the jungle? or in a great city? Is he losing his fortune at cards? or his decency in the drinking saloon? And what can we do, to help him away from the dangers that his pleasures and his passions call him to? What can we give him to eat? What can we wear that our homes and ourselves may please him, so that he will stay with us and be safe?"

"And what has all this got to do with Edgar?" asked Fanny. "He is not in the position of any of these brothers or husbands or

sons you speak of. He is a person who has done wrong and is on probation, and must live so as to prove his fitness for existing in a sane and orderly way. He must behave with steadiness and self-control and stand by his work. As for the lot of woman, as you describe it, how about the lot of those husbands who work year in and year out so that their wives may have money to spend in European adventure at gambling places and great hotels?"

"You are speaking of some bloodless creatures or of saints," said Janet; "I was speaking of men."

Fanny answered with annoyance and inconsequence. "One would suppose you thought I understood nothing," she said.

"Fanny, I am sorry! It's the wind that makes me irritable. And don't think I am not troubled just as you are about Edgar, for, indeed and indeed, I am. I am afraid that he will not come back. What shall you do if he does n't return to-morrow?"

"He must come to-night if he comes at all. I shall make that very clear to him either by letter or telephone."

"But if you push him too hard —"

"Janet — my dear Janet — you are a fool."

"I know it," Janet admitted, "and I thank all the stars in heaven that neither as husband, nor brother, nor friend, does Edgar belong to me.

"I should make a poor reformer," she said a little later; "while I talked of the necessity of punishment, and condemned those who did wrong, I should be seeing, or thinking I saw, into the reasons of their doing it, — seeing excuses for them, — seeing how I myself might have so fallen had I been more tempted and less equipped by nature and education and circumstances to resist temptation. I can imagine how a man might fall quick — quick without any great harm in him; how he might become a thief or a drunkard just because he met the wrong friend at the corner when he was a little more cold, or hungry, or tired than usual; how he might drink the glass too much — without being any worse and only a little more weak than myself, or you."

"Janet! you are almost unmoral! How would you have standards upheld? And without standards —"

So the women talked on and on while the wind rose.

Later on, the day was helped by the arrival of friends who brought Janet news of those other friends with whom she had passed the winter. They sent messages asking her to join them for more travel during the winter to come. Japan was mentioned, or Honolulu, and this brought recollections of normal, pleasant days with persons who were emotionally safe. Then Janet suffered a revulsion of feeling against this boy who brought her such disturbance. She wanted to be again in the safe and pleasant places; she wanted to be free of Edgar, and she told herself that she would be free. The door was open, after all; she was not trapped, she could walk out.

Social gossip also reported a "stag party" at the Stones', which, in the absence of the Misses Stone, — who were at Bar Harbor, — promised to be exciting and prolonged. It was said that the Stone automobile had been sent to town, returning with a large supply of whiskey. And then Janet forgot everything but the boy, and, figuratively speaking, wrung her hands.

The perversity of life seemed inhuman. When Edgar was trying to right himself with existence, why should there be a Johnny Stone next door? And why should the person in authority over him be one who could only half understand, one who urged him to undertake sheep as the work of his days? Could the breeding and care of such creatures balance his flaming impulses toward ardent personal living? It was inevitable that Edgar should come to hate sheep, and was it conceivable that he could be held to a task that he hated?

Janet herself did not appear to weigh in the balance at all. This was evident — it was true — and yet it could not be true. For many weeks he had come to her with the hopes and happenings of his days as freely as she imagined he would have come had he been her son, and he had brought her something else, — something that a man does not give his mother. Was it conceivable that in an hour she could have become nothing to him? Yet he had gone back to the companions of his wild, disastrous years, and had gone directly from a glad, eager moment with her.

She recalled the shy, eloquent, happy eyes with which he watched her as she knelt by the pansy bed, and afterward, as he walked with Fanny, he had laughed, suddenly and rapturously. He could not have done so because of anything his sister had said. Fanny Chilworth was not of the kind that causes such laughter, nor had she been in a mood for humor of any kind. He had laughed with a little explosion of happiness, and if he was happy it was not merely because he was at home again with his sister and the sheep. Yet the next hour had found him gone.

Janet had allowed him to warm her life, and now it seemed bleak and cold. The fear that she meant nothing to him wounded her deeply; but the fear that he was unworthy wounded her more, for she had wanted him to be steadfast, and to live by his highest impulses. She wanted this as selflessly as though she had been his mother.

And then her mind dragged her back over the days which had gone since he came — stormy and broken-hearted — from the mist — from his disgrace and his weaknesses. She remem-

bered how he had sought to atone, how prodigal had been his self-accusation, how violent and torturing a thing his shame. And who could say he had not been brave and ardent in fulfilling uncongenial tasks which had been so rashly chosen for him.

Janet's bewilderment and misery seemed part of that rising tumult of wind which finally drove both women into the house and made it necessary to move all piazza furniture into a sheltered corner. Janet wondered if her pansies and poppies would not be destroyed, but was too unhappy to care, though the outside world of distracted trees and grasses definitely increased her sense of trouble.

Just before dinner Miss Chilworth was summoned to the telephone and she came angrily back from it.

"I will not endure this," she said, joining her guest who was sitting miserably in the library, that being the only corner where the wind did not blow.

"What will you not endure?"

"Edgar says that he may be with the Stones for a day or two yet, and is not sure of coming

back to work even then. He wants me to send him clothes for a week, at least."

"Oh, Fanny! What did you say?"

"I tried to be quiet. I told him that I should have to ask him to come back to-night before twelve o'clock, and be ready for work to-morrow morning. The men could not go on with the equipment unless he was here to superintend it, and I told him that he was on probation and must prove his earnestness by keeping steadily at work. I told him also that if he did not come back to-night, I should refuse to sink another cent of money in this industry, or in any other for him, as he would have proved his unfitness for responsible work. I could feel that this had an effect on him, and then he asked if Mr. Stanton had gone, as if he wanted to save time before committing himself to an answer. Finally he said he should probably be back to-night."

"And if he is n't, Fanny?"

"If he is n't, I shall do as I said. I have been too indulgent already. I ought to have waited a year for Edgar to prove his steadiness before spending money to set him up in any industry."

Janet felt that Fanny had handled the situation with firmness and ability. It was now brought to a single issue: the willful boy either returned to-night or suffered a withdrawal of favors which might drive him permanently from under his sister's protection.

At dinner the two friends were almost silent, and afterwards they sat together in the hall and waited while the wind fell and the night outside seemed to draw long breaths of relief and peace before the onslaught which could be expected to-morrow. The old dog waited also, with his head upon his paws.

"A man would tell us we were fools to trouble ourselves about a boy like Edgar," said Fanny. "A man would say, 'He is n't worth it — let him go.'"

Janet said, "I can't bear to think of his failing when he has tried so hard."

"I think he will come this time, unless —"

"Unless what?"

"It is easy to drink too much at the Stones' stag parties, and Edgar does what is easy."

Janet's face grew suddenly pale and older. "Has he often — come home — like that?"

"Not often."

"Then it has happened?"

"Yes."

"Hark!"

"It's nothing. Ajax growled; he would never growl for Edgar."

"Fanny, if the boy has really got into trouble, you will forgive him?"

"I must, I suppose; that is to say, I will provide a home for him so long as he will decently stay in it."

Miss Chilworth rose and lifted her arms with more of passion than she had ever shown Janet. "I wish that he had never been born," she said.

"You speak as though there were no hope for him," cried the younger woman, "and that is wrong. That is ridiculous just because he is away two nights."

"And it is ridiculous for you to talk about two nights."

Janet knew that it was, and talked no more.

CHAPTER XIII

THE evening passed slowly. Fanny read the stock market of the Sunday paper, and the old dog, forgetting his anxiety, slept and snored. Janet, with her eyes on the page of a book which she did not read, wondered how she could save the boy so that Fanny's justice should not fall upon him and the scant privileges and honors which were his be taken away. Despoiled and restrained she felt that Edgar would not stay long in his sister's home, and to go out of it now, without money or definite hope, might mean his destruction. It was not tolerable that Edgar should be destroyed while she could save him.

Fanny herself, unconsciously, showed her a way.

"You look worn out," she said; "why don't you go to bed? I shall wait, of course, until he comes."

"I could not sleep if I knew you were waiting alone," answered Janet.

"But I must wait. I must know what time

he comes and if I am to be obeyed. This night will decide all things between Edgar and me."

"And, perhaps, between Edgar and life."

"Janet! You make it hard for me! What would you have me do?"

Janet gave her no answer. She walked to the French window, which was open, and leaned against the screen much as she had done on the evening when Gerald Stanton asked for her love.

"How still it is!" she said at last. "I don't think a leaf stirs. It does n't seem as if in all the world there were the sound of a footstep coming home."

"Why are you so much interested in him?"

"I don't know; but it is as if he were my son, and yet not my son. I want him to be saved, Fanny. Oh, I want him to be saved!" Her voice was low and yet like a cry.

"He is not worth it." There was contempt and impatience in Miss Chilworth's voice, and with it Janet seemed to hear Mr. Stanton's indifferent "they say he is no good."

It was in such words that the world spoke of Edgar. Janet knew that they were not true,

and was possessed by a deep anger when she heard them.

Useless now to warn her against trying to save this particular son of man, — useless to show her others who were not in need of being saved, who could go with her into the safe and pleasant ways that she had grown to long for. When have women heeded such warnings?

To Fanny she spoke quietly, "If we both go up now and leave all the lights on and your door open, you cannot sleep until he comes in and turns them off. In that way you can know at what hour he comes, without having the fatigue of sitting up."

"I am not sure that Edgar will arrive — if he arrives at all — in a condition to think of turning off lights," said Fanny.

Janet waited until a wave of spiritual and physical nausea, caused by Fanny's words, had passed, and then answered, still quietly, "In such a case you could certainly know when he came, the night is so still."

"I would much rather wait for him here."

"Then I will wait with you."

But Fanny was startled when Janet turned

back into the well-lighted room. "You look very ill," she cried; "Janet, you must go to bed at once."

"I could n't. I could n't lie there and rest knowing that you were here."

"Then we will both go. What you say is true about my knowing when he comes, even if I am in bed. Do you feel ill? Have you another attack of that pain?"

"A slight one only." And now Janet became aware that in her physical being there was growing the obscure trouble that had been pursuing her intermittently during the summer months.

Fanny appeared to forget everything but her friend's welfare. Did she want May to sit up with her? Would n't she like some whiskey, or Fanny's electric heating-pad? It was n't too late to call the doctor, nor would it be so at any time during the night if she felt worse.

But Janet wanted none of these things and was able to reassure Fanny as to her condition, so that Miss Chilworth finally left her in her room with the parting words, "Don't lie awake worrying about Edgar; he is not worth it."

The phrase was becoming like a refrain, and every time she heard it Janet felt the rise within her of some indomitable force which urged her to fight at his side.

One last plea she made. "Fanny, when he comes you won't speak to him to-night? You will wait until both of you have sensible daylight to talk by. Remember that we have not given him a chance to explain yet."

"The explanation is his own instability," answered Fanny, but promised that she would not speak to her brother that night.

Janet braided her hair and slipped on a white wrapper, but made no other preparations for bed. Then she sat by the window where she could see Edgar come across the terrace. The lights would go out at midnight so that Fanny might think him at home, for Janet was resolved to turn them off herself if he did not come in time.

There was a short period of those dim noises attendant upon a household's preparation for sleep, and then to Janet's room there came only silence.

It seemed incredible that a world full of liv-

ing things could be so still. The hylas and tree-toads of spring had ceased to sing, and the mid-summer pulsations of insects had not begun. Leaves and grasses were motionless. Now and then came a sound from the vines under her window when a bird woke and stirred in its nest with a tender little murmur.

There had been moments when the stormy intrusion of Edgar into her life had seemed more than Janet could bear. She had rebelled against the burden of his charm and uncertainty. But to-night she knew the futility of such rebellion. When there was anything to do for him she must do it, paying full price of pain and effort, but counting it as nothing. It was one of the involuntary tolls that she must render life, a thing to be neither questioned nor resisted. Edgar was of the men for whom women suffer.

A clock struck eleven, and then half-past. The heat and excitement of her anxiety increased intolerably till she rose and went downstairs into the bright empty rooms. Ajax was sleeping on the piazza just outside the open door, and he lifted his head and looked at her,

wagging his tail, which made some noise on the boards. Fanny's room was directly above, and if she were awake she must have heard the sound and thought Edgar was at home. This was as it should be. Janet looked at the clock, and saw that it was five minutes before twelve; then walking to an electric switch, which controlled the lights of the lower floor and stairway above, she turned it off and immediately the house was in darkness. Before midnight sounded, Fanny's door closed and the light which streamed from her window onto the terrace went out also.

But now it seemed that her work was unfinished. If Edgar came in later, noisily and unwarned, he would wake his sister, and Janet's subterfuge would have been useless; so she knew that she must wait for him still.

On the mantel there were matches and a candle, and she dared not move away lest she should miss finding them in the darkness when his foot should be heard on the terrace.

It was useless at this hour to pretend that Edgar had not fallen from the standard he had set himself to live by. She faced the possibility of his coming home after heavy drinking, faced

it with loathing, shrinking, and fear, — not of physical violence, but of spiritual horror.

In what seemed a surprisingly short time the clock struck one, and just then there came again the sound from the branches beyond the door, as some bird woke and turned in its nest with a tender sound, which seemed like a parody to the tormented woman.

It would not be long before dawn, and if he did not come home during the hours of sheltering darkness, would he come at all? Might not shame and willfulness overcome him as they had done before, and this boy, with his high, impetuous spirit, so strong in action, so weak in resistance, become one of life's derelicts?

The tears ran down her face as she thought of what he might become and saw him as she had known him during the last weeks. She remembered the glow and force of his swift young spirit, so fearless and full of hope. She thought of his eagerness to do right, his capacity for stormy shame.

By the chair on which she now sat he had one day come to her out of the rain, and she had made him kneel on the hearth rug and dry him-

self while he told her of his anger and discouragement; and now, through this dreadful darkness, she seemed again to hear his voice crying, "I do want to do right! I do! I do!"

The tears ran down Janet's face, and she looked at the place where the open door must be, fearing now to see it grow defined in the gray dawn. The clock struck the half-hour, and after that she became conscious that her physical pain was increasing. Though she had been chilly when she first sat down, but had not gone for a wrap lest she lose her way and so make a noise in the darkness, she was now very warm and thought she must have some fever. After a while her consciousness grew sodden with a distressful drowsiness, and the hour and the things she waited for grew confused.

An indefinite time passed, and then she was roused with a suddenness which brought her trembling to her feet. A Jericho motor-horn had shrieked from somewhere, and there came the sound of rollicking men's voices through the night. In an instant her mind was clear, and she knew they came from the driveway behind the house, and that Edgar's was among them.

Some one said "Hush" and another laughed. Then there was the grinding of shifting gears as the motor went away, and she heard Edgar trying to open the door. It was locked, and evidently he had no key, so rather than risk his coming round by the terrace under his sister's window, Janet stumbled through the dark to let him in, not daring to waste time lighting a candle. She found herself very weak and shivering violently, but reached the door in time, and opened it for him.

"Be quiet," she whispered as he entered, "Fanny will know." She was conscious of speaking with effort, and her words were not quite those that she wished to say.

With him there came into the darkness strong masculine odors of tobacco and something else that sickened her.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Hush! I have a light." She was able to make her way back and knew that he followed her, but when she found the matches her hands shook so that she could hardly strike one against the box.

At last, by the dim, reluctant candlelight,

they stood revealed to each other. His face, hot, reckless, and excited, was changed almost beyond recognition by his adventures among the violent pleasures that men love. Hers, sensitive, pallid, and dismayed, showed as a frightened child's between the two braids of her dark hair.

He stared at her a moment, bewildered by the intimacy of her undress and by the mystery of her presence there at all.

"You!" he said. "You!"

She found that she had not full control of herself and was speaking childishly.

"Hush! You will spoil it all, and I have waited so long."

"You have waited —"

"Fanny must not know how late you came back."

"You waited," he said, "for me!" But his face did not soften.

She nodded. "Please, please don't talk so loud!"

He looked at her with heavy, hostile amazement. "I say, what are you afraid of?" he asked, subduing his voice to a harsh whisper.

"Of Fanny. If she hears us she will know that you came in very late, and — and — " She was unable to say what she wanted.

"And what is that to you? I wonder if any man ever understood any woman." He came a step nearer so that the rank smell of liquor assailed her, and then she knew what thing it was which had transformed her boy into a sullen, callous creature that she put out her hand to thrust away.

"You have been drinking!" she cried.

"Not much," he answered indifferently. "I've been playing, though; see!" He plunged his hand into his trousers pocket and drew out bank notes and silver which he flung on the table. "There is more somewhere," he continued, speaking in the same noisy whisper and feeling at random in other pockets. He found more money and dropped it upon the first, his lips curving in an ugly smile. "Gold!" he said. "See! Was it some game or not? Was it worth a night up and annoying old Fanny? There's enough there to rid me of her and the sheep and all the rest of it. God! To be free again! To feel the wind of the prairie —"

He started to pick up the money, but a change came over him. He dropped his hand heavily upon the table instead, and leaning forward, stared ahead of him into the night.

"I don't care for the money, though," he murmured, speaking as though forgetful of her presence. "It's the game that counts; it makes me forget —" His face changed, becoming older, sullen, and unhappy, with wide-open, haggard eyes that were filled with some dreadful questioning of life. "What's the use?" he muttered; "what's the use of the whole damned show — what's the use?"

In the candlelight, now burning in a tiny, motionless pillar of flame, Janet saw him dimly — like some nightmare, staring and muttering, with loose mouth and haggard questioning eyes. She felt that she must fall or cry out, but actual power of motion was taken from her.

Suddenly the dawn was there,—standing like a specter in the doorway. Edgar became aware of it and stared more heavily, more unhappily than before.

"The dawn!" he muttered. "What's the use of the dawn?"

And then slowly, deliberately, and distinctly he began to curse it. He cursed it because it had seen the hour of his birth, and because it brought disillusions and awakenings and the end of pleasures, and showed certain things nakedly, and because it would some day stalk over the world and see him lying dead —

His dreadful words had a gravity that belongs to men older than himself. They ceased as deliberately as they had begun, and then after a long silence he straightened himself slowly.

Looking about him he saw the candle and stared at that also, as though it held some desolate meaning for him.

"Dawn and candlelight," he said, "dawn and candlelight. Did n't some one write a poem about it? Dawn and candlelight —"

He lifted his arms above his head, "Oh, my God!" he breathed, and the words were not an oath, but a shuddering, weary call. Then he saw Janet in the dim light, the folds of her dress and braided hair falling straight about her.

Gray, stricken, shaking, she leaned against the wall, supporting herself there by her hands which pressed backward upon it.

As he looked at her something more human came into his face, and he seemed aware that she was ill with some sickness which the hour, bad as it was, could not account for.

"I say, what is it?" He made a motion toward her, and she cried out in a loud voice which she could not control, — "You are horrible to me! Do not come near me!" Then she put her hand quickly over her mouth to stifle the sound.

Edgar, after one apprehensive look upstairs, stepped back and continued to look at her with some dismay. "That's nonsense," he said. "I have n't taken much. What are you doing down here, anyway?"

Janet now supported herself by her hand on the mantelpiece, for a physical faintness almost overcame her. She could have fallen but for the fear of his catching her, and the dread of feeling his breath — his dreadful breath — upon her face.

He did not attempt to touch her, but stood gazing with anxiety and some resentment. "Let me call some one."

"No, no! You will waken Fanny." She clung blindly and stupidly to this point, the only one

that seemed to steady her in the whirling dawn.

"Who cares if we wake Fanny. I am done with her, anyhow."

"No, no," she pleaded weakly, and it was the fear of this and of his touching her that gave her power to move across the hall and climb the stairs. She knew that he watched her — that he followed her lest she fall; but she escaped without feeling his touch, and was alone at last in her room with the door closed, to struggle with this almost mortal sickness of her body and her soul.

CHAPTER XIV

And yet the occasion had not actually been a terrible one. Men excited by wine and cards might have paused long enough from their game to say of his cursing, "Chilworth is in fine form," or to urge him to "shut up" or give them something more cheerful. An indifferent woman would have experienced disgust — a weak one would scarcely have been afraid.

But Janet was none of these. She saw her beloved boy transformed into an ugly, repellent creature, saw the fair edifice of his new life fall in, and perceived these things through a medium of fever and pain.

Now, in the period of semi-consciousness which followed her tumbling upon the bed, the vision of him loomed morbid and terrible through her physical distress. She sought to escape it and grasped dimly at memories of pleasant, kindly, normal beings among whom such visions could not come. Then, realizing a return to consciousness and the pain and nausea of her body, she knew herself to be seriously ill.

And now she saw his eyes — his haggard, desolate eyes. Could a woman turn away from such misery? Certainly the woman of his future, the woman who was to love him utterly, could not do so, and in feverish, poignant confusion Janet imagined herself in that woman's place, seeking to cover his eyes with her hands — with her lips, that they should not stare so and be so full of woe —

There was sunlight in her room before the fever left her, and then for a while she slept.

Fanny roused her to meet the day — Fanny very composed and competent in an immaculate suit of white linen. "I came to see if you would not like breakfast brought up here," she said; "Edgar and I had ours some time ago." But she became less composed when seeing that Janet had not undressed and lay on the outside of her bed.

"I was too ill to undress," Janet explained weakly; "but I am all right now."

And here was Edgar again confronting her with the incredible picture of a normal breakfast with his sister. She did not want this picture, and her weakened nerves craved rest from

the sound of his name. Then Fanny sat on the edge of her guest's bed — a thing only an insensitive person can do to an invalid. Her own mood, after an excellent night, was cheerful and serene, and she evidently sought to divert Janet pleasantly from the thought of illness.

To Fanny's question as to what she would like to eat, Janet answered truthfully that she could eat nothing, for the thought of food filled her with loathing. But she found herself very weak when she tried to stand and consented to have some tea.

Fanny suggested that they have a specialist from town at once, but Janet demurred and begged her to wait, having already formed a plan of her own. Then there came again the shattering name.

"You knew that Edgar was at home again last night?"

Yes, Janet knew.

"He came in just before midnight and so I had him wakened at the usual time. I knew you would be glad."

With weak lips Janet said that she was glad.

"He must have been drinking or gambling, or

both, for he looks ill and repentant. I could not make him eat anything. Gossip about Gerald Stanton seems to have gone everywhere, Janet. Edgar had heard you were going to marry him and asked me when. It was a most improper question to put just as Annie was passing the rolls, but perhaps it was as well, for it gave me a chance of denying it before her, which she will, of course, report everywhere. Poor Gerald Stanton! I could have laughed! I must have a very serious talk with Edgar, though I did n't say very much this morning as he was evidently prepared to go directly to work. But of course he can't be allowed to fall back into these loose ways — even once a week. For the moment I only said that I was glad he came back before midnight, and he stared at me like an owl with those great, solemn eyes of his, but did not answer. He is terribly subdued, Janet, — more as he was when he came back last spring."

Janet stirred uneasily. She did not want to think of Edgar as humble and subdued. In her weakness she wanted to feel toward him as she had felt the night before, so that never again would he have the power of hurting her. She

was too ill to be hurt, or to endure the thought of his charm while holding the knowledge of his instability.

That day the wind rose again and rushed mightily over the earth. Janet heard it and thought vaguely of her pansies which were being mercilessly treated, but she did not care very much. The pansy bed was among the other things of the summer which she wished to drop from her consciousness.

That day she stayed in bed, and to Fanny's suggestion that she see a doctor she gave only promises for doing so in the future. Miss Chilworth wished a specialist to come from town, and Janet felt herself as unequal to contending with Fanny as to seeing Edgar.

"Please, please don't tease me about it," she begged. "If I have another attack I promise to see a doctor as fast as you can get him here." And with this Fanny was forced to be content.

The physician's daughter was now convinced as to the cause of her trouble and had made up her mind to an operation in the near future. The danger of possible delay gave her no fear, for she was in the mood when one looks at life

wearily—living and dying seemed alike indifferent.

The next day Edgar was reported to have entered into a period of superhuman work and conscientiousness. Fanny said that she could not make him eat anything and he did not come in from the fields till after dinner, nor could she imagine when he slept, for Annie had heard him walking his room all night. "He was off this morning early, after coming to my room to ask how you were, and he does not expect to come back till late."

Janet felt better, and in the afternoon she went downstairs to lie upon a long chair, which Miss Chilworth, kind and authoritative, had placed for her on the terrace under a sugar-maple.

It was a noble tree with erect and soaring trunk, splendid branches, and spacious chambers of green through which there drifted sunlight and shade, and where the sudden rush of birds' wings passed and the swift movement of insects. Janet lay under it, relaxed and quiet, looking now upward into the leaves and branches, now downward over the valley,

and to the mountain, upon which lay the shadow of a great, still cloud.

The spirit of Janet was also still and gratefully shadowed. After pain and exhaustion the great need of her being was for rest; her nerves seemed unequal to any emotional response. The heat, the light, and the ache of living had slipped from her. She knew that in a few weeks she might pass out of the land of the known and go where no human voice could follow her, but she did not care. There was too much suffering in the place of human voices, and she was ready to pass away from it forever.

In a complete detachment of spirit she surveyed the world about her, and it seemed a strange world into which people were born craving to do certain things which were wrong and in the doing of which they were often slain. Edgar would do wrong, and suffer, and it seemed that no one could help him, but some day there would come rest for him. And thinking this it seemed easy for the pain he had caused her to slip away.

Janet did not feel sure that Fanny would suffer very much, and yet the figure of Fanny was

not without pathos, for she wanted to do right and be just and kind, but she did not understand — she had no vision into the hearts of men, and so she would always be alone.

Gerald Stanton also wished to do right, and had something of the vision. He suffered, and through no act of perversity of his own. If Janet died, she knew that he would be violently unhappy for a time, but afterwards it would be better for him that she was gone.

The voices did not cry very long, so for herself — for Janet — there was quiet. It was enough that a breeze, fragrant from woods and pastures, lifted the hair from her brow; enough that there was sunlight and shadow in the branches above her. A hermit thrush was singing in some remote and lonely place, and nothing more in this world remained for her to do while she waited with hands relaxed for the peace which would have no ending.

She felt her hold on life to be lessening and sank deep and deeper into the waters of Lethe. Her eyelids closed under them and she bathed in the flood with a rapturous peace. If death were like this, how little there was to fear! How

far off was the pathos of Fanny, the pain of Gerald Stanton, the storm and the charm and the burden of Edgar. For that hour she was in love with death — death merciful and serene, which drew convulsive spirits back into the measureless oblivion from which they had come.

And then there came a footstep on the grass.

CHAPTER XV

JANET lifted her eyelids and saw Edgar coming to her across the terrace. Before she could come back from the place where there had been peace, she knew that he knelt at her side and looked at her with shamed and miserable eyes.

"You are better?" he asked.

Janet still looked at him in silence. She was numb in spirit and body.

Very slowly, and watching her as though for a sign of disapproval, he laid a small bunch of pansies upon her knee and then bowed his head as though unable any longer to endure his shame.

Still Janet said nothing; but the sight of the soft little flowers, so humbly offered, and of the boy's hidden face that must presently be shown her, full of desolation and appeal, was bringing her back to the world, and she could have cried out with the pain of her return.

When Edgar lifted his head and looked at her in silence, his young face asking much of her, Janet, still pallid and frail among her pillows, looked back at him as from some remote spot.

But Edgar, humble and wistful, knelt on by her side. His voice came to her stilled and stricken like his face.

"Did you mind my picking the flowers?"

Janet tried twice before she could speak, and then she said childishly, —

"I thought they were all blown away."

"They are safe. I built up something to keep the wind away when it blew so the morning after —"

Before the agony of shame in his young eyes Janet turned her own away. Reluctantly, almost resentfully, she was coming back to life, but she was still remote and a little unfeeling.

"Do you want me to go away?" he asked.

"I came down for a short time," she said; "I did not expect to see you."

"You did n't want to?"

Her lips formed the word, "No," and then his eyes were stricken, indeed.

"Is it all over? Will you never be friends again. I don't blame you if you won't, — after what I did, — but I can't go on — not here with Fanny and the work — I can't go on unless you will be my friend."

And now Janet had come back to him, but resentfully, remembering the place of her peace. A little color flushed her face and she lifted her hands to push back her hair with a heavy gesture that was not without passion.

"You were horrible to me that night. How can I have some one for a friend who may at any moment become horrible to me?"

His face quivered as from a blow and the tears started to his eyes. For an instant it seemed as if shame and torture would drive him from her side, but he knelt on asking and asking of her still, with a certain wildness of appeal behind the childlike simplicity of his words.

"It was because I thought you were going to marry Mr. Stanton," he said. "I shall never forget how I felt when I came back and saw you kneeling by the pansy bed, and when you looked up I knew you were glad I was there. It seemed as if we were both very happy to be together again, although, of course, I knew you did not care as much as I did — I could n't expect that. And then, when we walked toward the house, I remember how the bird was singing, and you looked up and heard it too, and

smiled. You were all in white and your face was pale—you were delicate and so — so sweet! — I had so many things to tell you. Then Fanny told me about Mr. Stanton — that he was in the house, and wanted you to marry him — and she said I must not interrupt, but must keep out of the way, for she hoped that you would say 'yes.' After that there seemed a dreadful storm inside of me that I could not control — that I could not bear — and I ran to get rid of it. I ran through the woods and up the mountain until I fell, but the storm was still inside of me. I was wild and angry with you and with life, and if I had seen Mr. Stanton I might have killed him. When I came down from the mountain a day and a night were gone — I did not mean to come home again. Billy Stone met me and took me with him. After I met the boys I felt differently — I wanted to defy the world and Fanny — and you; that was why I came back late — why I came back at all. There in the hall I found you — I had been drinking some — but not as much as you think — and had n't eaten anything to speak of since I ran away. I was exhausted and

excited and I could n't understand why you did n't care. You were going to marry Gerald Stanton — I was horribly unhappy. I remember what I said — what I did — and all the while you were ill — you were suffering — and sitting up all night to help me, doing what no woman — no good woman — ever did before."

His voice broke, and he turned his head away. "You were suffering —" He flung his arm over the edge of her chair and dropped his head upon it.

So now the heat and charm and burden of Edgar were with her again. The boy who had been dear to her knelt at her side tortured with pain and remorse, telling her that all his wild actions had been because of her, and that because of her he would be good, and patient, and harder-working in the future. His pleading had the passionate abandonment of a child.

"Please, please give me another chance! No woman ever did for me what you did that night. There has never been any one that I cared for very much, and who wanted me to be good, except you. Give me another chance; I will never make you suffer. Oh, you must

believe—you must know—that I will never make you suffer!"

"How can I believe?" But Janet knew herself to be already delivered into his hands.

"What can I say? Oh, there must be something that I can say to persuade you!"

"There is nothing. The person into whose life you come must suffer one way or another. You can say nothing to persuade me that I shall not be unhappy through you; but it shall be as you say."

"You will be my friend again?"

"Yes."

"As you were before?"

"Yes."

He looked at her a moment as though he could scarcely believe her, then murmured "Thank you," and dropped his head again on the arm of her chair. She heard him sobbing, and the mother and the woman in her yearned over him so that she touched his hair with her hand. "Child, child," she said unsteadily.

When at last he lifted his face, his eyes were wet and in them was a shining and a glow like nothing she had ever seen. His smile was grand

and transfiguring, like that of Sir Galahad when he came within sight of the Holy Grail. "You will see what I can do," he said.

A sudden breeze tossed a corner of her scarf across her cheek, and putting out his hand he drew it away with a grave and tender gesture. His hand lingered near her shoulder.

"Are you tired now; do you want me to go?"

"Yes. I want to be alone to think it over."

"But you are better?"

"Yes."

"You will never be sorry," he said. "You will never regret. All my life will be lived just to make you glad."

His face was pale and tired, but the shining and the glowing in his eyes deepened while he looked at her.

"There is something else about me that you must know," he said; "something I ought to tell you before you are quite sure you will be my friend." He rose, and while he stood looking down at her Janet knew what it was he would say, and the knowledge of it suddenly blazing on the shadowed threshold of her life was all that she could emotionally endure.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT the boy considered himself in love with her had been a realization which Janet was growing to face. But she told herself that she was too old; that he was overemotional; and that his unusual expressiveness was misleading to any one who sought to gauge his strength of feeling.

But now she realized that he loved her as deeply as it was possible for him to do, and that on no account would he be put off from telling her so. She realized also that the knowledge of his love gave her life a precious warmth and color; but that it was something she could not admit, and upon which she must somehow contrive to close the door.

That his life would be the stronger for loving her she thought very possible. He would suffer, but he would also find happiness and an inspiration to his highest effort at an hour of his life when he vitally needed such inspiration.

No, for Edgar there would come little harm, and much good from the experience of loving

her, but to Janet, — to the older woman, — who must see him ultimately pass away, there would come a brief, sweet warmth and fragrance and a long aftermath which was not pleasant to contemplate.

Janet sought to keep off his confession till she could possess a more complete control of her reason and emotions, but it became at once apparent that Edgar was not to be denied.

When she left her room next morning, comparatively refreshed after a good night and a quiet breakfast, he was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, barring her way to freedom of descent, as he presently was to bar her escape into some life where he did not exist.

He seemed to have grown thin, and he was pale and immensely grave.

"How are you?" he asked.

"I am almost well." As she strove to make her voice light and gay he smiled a small, faint smile, and his eyes began to glow and shine.

"It is good to hear your voice," he whispered. "I have been longing —"

"I thought I would go out," said Janet

breathlessly; "I thought I would go out and look at the pansies."

"I will come with you."

The day was windless and soft; blue veils of atmosphere hung between them and the mountain. The habitual splendor and brilliancy of the landscape were dimmed, and it was a quiescent world that enveloped Janet and Edgar as they walked in silence over the lawn.

Janet said to herself, "I am old — I am old, compared with this boy." And she said aloud and quite boldly, "I have been thinking of you."

He lifted his head a little and looked at the mountain-top. Janet saw him smile suddenly, a smile that was happy and grave.

"I was thinking, as I often do, how it would feel to be your mother," she continued; "of how often you would make me suffer and how often you would make me glad."

He turned to her with a look of deep reproach. "Why do you speak as if you were old? Do you believe that I think of you so?"

"I should be much hurt if you did." She sought to parry him lightly.

But he was not to be parried. All violence

seemed to have gone out of him and all possibility of mirth or lightness.

"How old are you?" he asked.

She considered a moment. "Years and years and years older than you are," she said finally.

Edgar considered also. "It might be just six years," he observed.

"It is just two more than that," said Janet.

"It is nothing," he answered.

They came to the pansy bed and in answer to her questions he told her in what way he had protected them from the wind, and how finding it fallen this morning he had come out early to take away the screens. Then he knelt by the flowers and handled one of the plants that had somehow grown apart from its neighbors.

"I did n't want this one to be hurt," he said, "because it had flowers that were dark blue — and sweet — like you —" He paused. "It was n't hurt," he added. "I took care of it. It was n't hurt."

Janet felt warmth grow in her cheeks — not from embarrassment, but because of a sudden uprising of life within her.

"I often think pansies have a name, just as

persons do," she said; "but I never can find out what the name is."

"I know it. All pansies are just — little Janets."

He looked up at her adoringly and Janet turned her eyes away.

"You are a foolish boy."

But it was as though he had not heard.

"Do you know what it is I have to tell you?" he asked.

And Janet thought to herself, "How young — how young and untried and foolish he is to look at me and speak to me so and think that I do not know." Aloud she said, "I hope you have a great many things to tell me," and then despised herself for the evasion. For on this day the boy was true and unswerving in pursuit of his object. She could command no art, no cajolery, no strength or subtlety sufficient to make him swerve by the breadth of a span, or even to flutter his mood — a mood of gravity that gave no evidence of breaking into storm.

He had waited for her and taken her away from Fanny's house to tell her that he loved

her, and now she submitted to hearing him, knowing that she must.

With quiet deliberation he brought her cushions and made her comfortable against the trunk of a copper beech tree. Then, sitting on the ground at her feet, he turned up to her his young face. It seemed the face of one who has wept and fasted and been purged of all defilement, and was lifted to hers as that of the devout to the Madonna.

"It is absurd," thought Janet, "to be looked at like this. I who am just an average woman who have never been heroic, who have never done much good because it was too much trouble nor great harm because I have never been tempted — it is absurd." But there was a pain in her throat as in that of a child who wants to sob.

"Before I tell you everything, I want you to know what things I have given up," he said. "I shall not go any more to play cards and drink with Johnny Stone. I have told him so. And I shall not go any more to play tennis at the Club because it leads to other things. I have given my racquet away. I shall work as well

as I can to make the sheep farm a success, but I shall not give my life to it because it would never get the best of me. Next autumn I am going to enter some architectural school, and with the school and the farm, I shall have to work so hard that there will be no time for me to get into trouble — and so I can never make you unhappy. There will be no time for anything but work and —" He paused. "Are you pleased because I have decided these things?"

Yes, Janet said that she was pleased. She was also quite pale; tears and laughter were struggling within her as she saw this boy laying tennis racquet, cards, sheep farms at her feet, as a child might lay his toys. She also saw him adoring her as men adore women.

"I wonder if you know what I am going to tell you?" he asked.

"How can I tell until you do?" She smiled faintly.

Her cushion slipped and he replaced it for her. "Are you comfortable?"

"Yes."

He settled back on the ground and then said very simply, "I wanted you to know that

I love you —" His voice shook — "I love you."

"You must n't," said Janet. "You must n't love me."

"It is too late to say that. Nothing can stop me now. It's part of the world — like sunrises and sunsets. I wanted you to know how it was with me and how I had arranged my life so that I should not have time for anything but my work and loving you. I am not asking anything yet, except for you to be my friend. I know you don't care the way I do — you could n't after — after the things I have done. But there won't be anything more for you to be ashamed of. Last night I lay awake planning the things I could do so that you might be proud. I imagined how I might build something beautiful, and when it was finished we would stand before it side by side. I saw how your face would look when you were glad — and perhaps a little proud too — and I heard how your voice would sound. When morning came I knew I could n't wait another day without telling you, and knowing whether or not you would be my friend

just the same when you knew that I loved you."

"How can I take what I do not give? How can I let you give up a part of your life to me when there is no future for us?"

"There is all my life," he answered slowly — "all my life." His voice was deep and resonant, his manner still free from any hint of violence, or the impetuosity which was such a part of his nature. Never had Janet known him to be so quiet, and his face was still that of one who has fasted and wept.

"I can't go on without you — I can't go on," he said, and underneath his stillness she now heard a note of wild distress. "Except for you I don't care what happens to me. Fellows are not brought up the way they used to be — in fear of God. We are not taught much about God, and most of us are not sure whether we believe in Him or not, or in another life. We are not made to feel that right and wrong are immortal things either, so there is not much to hold on to, or look to, except to having as good a time as we can without hurting other people. And then some of us — a very few — meet a

woman like you — and the world is changed — the world is changed! So you see — you can't go back on me now, because you are everything. Your being in this world and caring for me a little makes this life worth while and another one seem true, and it makes one want to do right, as believing in God would do —"

"Hush, hush!"

"But you do care a little — you do — or you would n't have waited for me that night — when you were ill."

"I do care, but not in the way — not as you do."

"I am not asking it of you — yet."

"You must n't think you are ever to ask it."

"Why not?"

"I am eight years older —"

"What has eight years to do with you and me? There is only one thing I fear." He looked away from her — "If there is another man —" He spoke almost inaudibly.

"There is no other."

"Not Mr. Stanton?"

"No, oh, no!"

"Are you afraid I shall make you unhappy?

If you realized how I cared, you would know — you would know that I could not hurt you. I have given up all the things that you feared."

Janet said quietly, "It is no longer a question of whether you will hurt me or not. I care enough for that."

Now he saw that she looked faint and spent amid the burnished radiance of the copper leaves. It seemed almost as if the leaves were too much for her. He wanted to take her away where the branches were only green, or up to her chamber which faced the sunrising and would now be cool, with blue shadows. He ceased to speak of love or to plead with her for himself.

"Don't think of it — don't think of me until you are stronger. I should have waited. Oh, you look so tired —"

He told her his fancy about the copper leaves. "I believe you would rest better somewhere else. Why not come among the pines, where the moss is thick and soft as a bed?"

"It is too far."

"But I could carry you. Let me carry you there and make you comfortable, and then I will go away and not come back until you call."

Janet closed her eyes. She knew that it would be sweet to be carried by Edgar to the pines, and cared for there by him, and lie on the moss while fragrant, still hours passed over her, knowing that when she wished it he would come. But she could not yield to such softness.

When she opened her eyes he was looking at her anxiously. "Let me —" he began, but she stopped him with a gesture.

"I must think of what is best for us to do," she said, "and you must leave me to think alone."

"But you won't — you can't send me away. There must be some words in the world that I can find to say, so that you will not send me from you."

"It would not be for you, it would be for me to go away. This is your home."

"There would be no home without you."

And to Janet he did indeed look as desolate and homeless as a young thing could.

CHAPTER XVII

SUMMER is short among the hills where Miss Chilworth had built her home, but the brief months of it are not without heat and splendor. Trees, brooks, clouds, and winds dwarf those of the lowlands. There come great cruel birds like eagles and hawks, and tender fluttering ones that move in little flocks, and that thrush which is called the hermit, and rings wild sweet vesper bells through the evening woods. There come flowers, too, — larkspur, foxgloves, monkshood, phlox, and the bright procession of annuals, all growing high and strong; glowing, burning, shimmering, according to their nature during the four months in which frost is away from the earth.

It seemed as if in so bold, so splendid, so fecund a life, Janet must grow strong; but she did not. The realization of her serious trouble increased Edgar's watching and tenderness for her to something that she had found hitherto unimaginable. It made his love a precious thing even while she faced the outcome of it,

which would bring more pain to her than to himself.

And now she made her age her protection and her license. The affection she gave him, the homage he offered her, could only be allowed to find expression under the sheltering knowledge of his youth. He must understand that she was an older woman who saw him as a boy, and who could love him only as such. It was her wish to keep this knowledge before him; but it was evident that the eight years which stood between them, with the woman on the wrong side, were nothing to him. He believed so little in their significance that he did not even protest against her occasional emphasis upon them, but rather smiled at it.

"I think you say those things to tease me," he said.

During this time she felt that he was showing a humble and gallant spirit, for he seemed willing to give all without return, and he made no complaint.

Though not one to be content with half-loaves, he seemed grateful to be allowed to love her even without return, and his swift, young

ardor found expression in a prodigal care of her, and in arrangement of such things as could make her happy and well.

One Sunday morning he came to her eagerly. "Beyond the mountain the hills are white with laurel," he said. "People come from great distances every year to look at it, and could n't you go with me to-morrow? I would drive you myself in the big car and I will promise to go so quietly over the rough places that you will never notice them. Could n't you go?"

Janet wanted to, and would have done so in spite of her weakness, but for Miss Chilworth's protest. Being in possession of a great deal of personal independence, she would also have disregarded this protest and incurred Fanny's displeasure had it not been necessary in doing so to use Fanny's own car.

It was finally decided that Edgar should take the car himself and bring the laurel to Janet, since she could not go to see it growing. He was violently determined that she should see the flowers, for he knew she would love them, and it was weeks ago that they had planned the expedition together.

But Janet was not destined to receive much happiness from mountain laurel. Miss Chilworth was one who could only bend her will with a distress which was visited upon those about her. She was annoyed with Edgar because he had finally succeeded in wresting from her a permission to use the touring-car in order to give Janet the pleasure of seeing a large mass of bloom, and at the very moment of his departure something happened which caused his sister still greater annoyance.

It was James, the assistant chauffeur, who brought up the car, and this was entirely against Miss Chilworth's orders. Janet knew it to be so, and seeing him come up the drive, tried to engage Fanny's attention by pointing out the successful result of an application of Bordeaux mixture to the hollyhocks; but Fanny was not to be so engaged. She had seen James almost as soon as had Janet, and just as Edgar came out of the door, his sister came around the corner and demanded why her orders had been disobeyed.

James, a thin awkward boy with badly modeled features and colorless hair, chewed a

piece of grass, and with eyes cast down explained that the chauffeur had "gone over to Bob's" for a moment and not come back in time.

"Do not chew grass when I speak to you," said Miss Chilworth, "and who, may I ask, is Bob?"

"Bob" turned out to be a neighboring farmer from whom the chauffeur had borrowed a tool.

"You should have waited till he came back," she said, with a cold and heavy sternness, "or Mr. Chilworth could have walked down to the garage and taken the car himself. The next time I find you driving it you leave my service. Do you understand?"

Yes, James understood, and was shambling away when Fanny continued, "Nor do I wish you to speak to me of stray persons as 'Bob.' It is an intolerable American familiarity. What do I know of such people? What do I care about them any more than if they were dogs!" Into her voice and manner was gathered the scorn of aristocratic generations, and the weight and lash of it were almost intolerable.

Edgar, standing in the car while slipping on a

linen duster, grew white. He had made young James his friend, and, with socialistic tendencies acquired during his absence from the halls of his father, he had even allowed himself comradeship with the boy, quite as though he had been a human being like himself. Hearing him so spoken to, he turned upon his sister a look that was almost one of hate. Then his lips settled into a thin, hard line. He paused for a moment with his pale, furious young profile bent over the wheel, but he did not speak. Then the car bellowed as he flung open the throttle, and jamming down the speeds with a noise of ripping metal, disappeared round the curve.

"Edgar shall stop driving my cars also if he drives like that," muttered Fanny.

Janet sat on the doorstep. She was as pale as Edgar had been, and like him, she was almost hating Fanny, who had spoken with tones and language that no one of the human family should be suffered to use toward another.

"I fear I shall have to discharge that boy," continued Miss Chilworth. "He is constantly disobeying me, and I cannot endure his sulky manner."

"I did not think he was sulky; I thought he was afraid," said Janet.

Miss Chilworth answered, "Nonsense," and went into the house, leaving Janet alone with her hate, which gradually and comfortably subsided.

She knew Fanny to be kind to her employees, many of whom had been with her for years. She knew Fanny to be kind and just — when she was not angry. There had also been reasonable cause for displeasure in the disobeying of her order, and whether he was sulky or frightened, James's manners, while he chewed the grass, had been lacking in the style which Miss Chilworth certainly had a right to require from the members of her establishment.

Janet knew also that she could never love a woman of such imperious severities — such swift and withering contempts.

Edgar had started early in order to have the car back for his sister's use in the afternoon. It was an hour and a half across country to the hillsides of laurel, and he could not be expected back at the usual luncheon hour, but by early afternoon the expectant women told themselves that he was late.

The hours, still and hot, passed slowly, till they realized that he was too late and that no ordinary occurrence could account for this delay.

"He was in one of his furious tempers because I reproved one of my own men. I could see that," said Fanny; "but I should n't have thought he was angry enough to have an accident — and he is a skillful driver."

Janet thought he had seemed wild enough for anything, and her imagination ran an excited and miserable riot of conjecture. He had smashed Fanny's ten-thousand-dollar car, or smashed the car and killed himself. He might be helpless and injured by the roadside, or unidentified in some strange hospital, or had he been angry enough to have allowed himself a pause for drinking or gambling at the one large town he must go through? The day was intensely hot — he might have taken one drink and then another —

She found herself too weak to endure the anxiety; it made her almost dizzy; so that though mental restlessness urged her to a constant walking in and out of the house, physical

exhaustion at last compelled her to rest, and she threw herself down on the long chair, which was still under the maple tree where she had once lain in such deep peace that life itself seemed slipping gratefully away.

The air was without motion. At the zenith there loitered a large lazy cloud with silver edges, that suddenly discharged a rattle of thunder and a few drops of rain, then drifted off in silence — so lazily, so sleepily that it seemed as if only a perverse impulse could have caused such a manifestation of storm. It was a day for the explosion of perverse and terrible impulses that might be sleeping in the still heat — it was just the day when Edgar, about whose person events grouped themselves dramatically, might meet his Nemesis.

Fanny, who had been forced to abandon her afternoon plans, came across the terrace and sat down on the edge of her guest's chair.

"There is no longer any use for us to pretend something has n't happened to him," said Janet.

"I am afraid not; he should have been at home three hours ago, but you must n't mind

so much. It's absurd to mind things as you do, and Edgar of all persons is n't worth it."

"But there must have been a serious accident — perhaps a terrible one."

"He may only have met some friends and stopped to have a good time with them," said Edgar's sister, "and will get back about midnight with your laurel a faded pulp in the car."

"Oh, that dreadful laurel! I never want to hear the name of it again," cried Janet.

Fanny brooded somberly while she considered the effects of such an expedition upon her automobile.

"I am afraid we can never succeed," she said after a pause, — "Edgar and I can never succeed in living together as papa wished. I will not endure the sort of thing he subjects me to, nor wear my life out seeking to control and guide a spirit that can never be controlled, whether by another or by itself."

Janet admitted the case to be almost a hopeless one, and life seemed as much awry as it was possible for a thing to be.

Just before sunset there came the rush and

hum of Fanny's six cylinders from behind the pines, and Janet sprang to her feet.

"It is your car?"

"Yes. You see there was no accident. Edgar has just — done wrong. I shall not go to meet him." And she remained seated with a cold, severe face.

"I shall go," said Janet. "There may be some good excuse, like a carburetor or a magneto. You always assume the worst," she laughed nervously, and found herself to be trembling with relief.

But now Fanny was listening with a different expression. "Stay here, Janet, stay here!" she commanded. "I will go. He forgot to blow the horn at the curve, and is bringing the car up on low speed. Listen, he has stalled the engine and can't get it started. Something must be wrong with him when he drives like that."

"What do you mean, Fanny?"

On Fanny's face there was a look of indignation and cold disgust. "Why should you be subjected to seeing him or helping him when he is like this?"

"It is shameful to accuse him of the worst when you know nothing," cried Janet, sick and almost choking as she followed Miss Chilworth's swift passage to the house.

"Go back!" commanded Miss Chilworth, finding Janet by her side; but Janet would not go back. They heard the car start again, and grinding horribly in its low speed it came around the curve at last.

Instead of the unexplained horror which she feared, Janet saw a cloud of white laurel in the tonneau, and the boy's face almost as white, but composed and sweet, smiling at her over the wheel.

Noisily and awkwardly he brought the car to a full stop, and was still smiling at Janet as he slipped from behind the wheel and rose somewhat stiffly. Then they saw that his right arm was bound to his side. "It's broken," he said, in answer to their exclamation. "The self-starter would n't work and the crank kicked. I could n't find a doctor, so I made a farmer strap me up."

Fanny was sincerely concerned and cried out: "But, my dear boy, you must have been

in great pain! Where did it happen? How could you drive the car?"

He was now supporting himself against the radiator with his left hand, and explained that it had happened when starting the car just after borrowing a knife to cut the laurel. The man helped him get it. No, he had not found a doctor. He would like one now, though.

"But why did n't you go on to the city?" It was Fanny who spoke.

"I could n't spare the time," he said; "I had promised her the laurel."

"What did I care for laurel when you were hurt so!" cried Janet. "Oh, it is beautiful — I don't mean that, but you know I cannot bear to have you hurt. How could you! How could you!" She had come close to him and was trying unsuccessfully not to cry.

He saw this and smiled happily. "You wanted it," he said, and dropped fainting at her feet.

Then she took his head on her knee while Fanny ran for help, and her eyes were wet as she bent over the unconscious, helpless face. With its closed eyelids it seemed more like that

of Sir Galahad than ever, purged of the animal as unconscious faces often are, and possessing a purity as of marble in color and line. Nameless high chastities seemed written there — it was pathetic also because of its helplessness and youth.

There were voices calling through the house; people ran to help and exclaim. The boy's head lay upon her arm, her hand was against his hair, and, but for those who came, she would have kissed the young face. He was her child — her little boy — the being on the earth's surface who claimed and compelled her most, who needed her, who loved her, who was suffering and crippled for her sake.

CHAPTER XVIII

EDGAR'S broken arm and the cause of it were much-talked-of subjects during the next few days. His friends the Stones were among the first to hear of it, for the youngest of the Stone boys, who was still in college, had seen Edgar drive the car into his sister's avenue, and noticing the broken arm, ran after him, arriving at the house just as the unconscious body was carried into it.

Annie, the waitress, who had looked out of the window a moment before Edgar fainted, was on the steps in a semi-hysterical condition, and eager to describe the scene to any one who would listen. So Maurice Stone listened with profit. He had just taken "English A" in Harvard, which required him to write a thesis of one thousand words upon Robert Browning's "Ballads," and in Annie's exciting narrative of how Edgar, white and injured, had stood before Miss Eversly and smiled, saying, "You wanted the flowers," and then dropped at her feet as though dead, Maurice found a happy

analogy to "Pheidippides," which he carried home with glee. His sisters and brothers fell upon it eagerly and made it into a parody which they repeated among themselves with an endless recurrence of mirth.

They tried honestly to keep it secret because they were fond of Edgar, but it seemed too good to be wholly lost, and bits of it were brought by visitors to the hero, causing him just resentment.

Johnny Stone, who came among the first, insisted upon declaiming the entire verse, and that time Edgar could but laugh, for it was a good parody, such things being specialties of the Stone family; but he soon tired of the joke, and when Johnny left, calling back, "I'm killed, Sire, — and smiling the boy fell dead," — it being on record that Edgar had smiled when he fell, Edgar cried, "Oh, shut up," with a good deal of fierceness, and shied a stone at him which missed the mark, as it was thrown with a left hand.

Edgar said he only objected to the ribald lines on Janet's account, and this he believed. During the hours of his adventure he had not

thought himself a hero, but on looking back he felt that his act did possess something of heroism. Had he not suffered and dared in order to serve his lady? And though he was as modest as boys of his age ever are, and would not have admitted that the thing he had done was anything unusual, — he knew in his heart that it was so, and wished Janet might know it too. So it was annoying to have the glamour of his adventure transformed into a joke by that perverse alchemy familiar to such persons as the Stones.

But Janet was not inclined to belittle her knight's performance, and she listened happily to many inquiries concerning his broken arm and to eulogies upon the pluck and skill he had shown when he drove the great car over forty miles of rough and scorching country roads with only his left arm, while the pain in the other grew more intense with every movement, as pain in broken, unset bones will.

Miss Chilworth was able to find cause for irritation in her brother's adventure. "It was so like him to do something dramatic and touching like that, but no one seems to think of the fool-

ishness of it all, nor of the outrageous, unnecessary risk he took with my property. Crippled as he was it would have been impossible to control the car in any of the many emergencies that might have arisen. He could have found a doctor without going far —"

"He tried; but the man was miles away."

"He could have found one by going on to the next town, and have come home by train like any one else, and I would have sent James for the car that evening. But no, he must perform an almost superhuman feat while in severe pain, to bring you a few flowers, and then come tumbling unconscious at your feet. Of course, I can imagine that you would be touched."

"I am — very much touched," answered Janet, "though I have given him a good scolding for doing it."

"Oh, your scolding — Edgar is always doing wild things," she went on, "otherwise I should think he had fallen in love with you."

Janet answered nothing.

"You, and you only, have seen what he forces me to endure," continued Fanny, "and what

he will force me to endure so long as we both live."

Yes, Janet had seen, and she, also, had endured, but knowing his love and what he had suffered and risked for her, with the memory of his white, smiling face as he brought her the mass of flowers, and the vision of the other face, helpless and unconscious on her knee, she could think only of the charm and dearness of Edgar, and felt it to be obtuse of Fanny to credit her—Janet—with being reasonable and mentally composed so far as the boy was concerned.

"I am willing to give Edgar all credit for courage and skill," Fanny concluded, "but when dealing with other people's property it is best to have caution and sense."

"The car was n't injured, was it?" asked Janet politely, though she was tired of Fanny's preoccupation with it.

During the first few days Edgar had suffered some pain and a vast amount of discomfort from his broken arm, all of which he had borne with unexpected patience and sweet tem-

per. To have Janet sorry for him, to watch her cutting up his food at table, to feel her adjusting the bandage on his arm as she alone, being a physician's daughter, was able to do, filled him with something akin to shy rapture.

The stormy, willful boy was tame and gentle under her hand, so that she sometimes rallied him, called him "child," and accused him of asking her to do things for him which he could do for himself.

He admitted rather shyly that this was true. "I love to have you take care of me," he said.

"I should have supposed you to be the sort of man who scorned to be taken care of, and would be made angry if any one asked, 'Does it hurt?'"

"I love to have you ask me if it hurts." The shining of his eyes was beginning to make her uncomfortable.

"You look as young — as young —" he said disjointedly.

And she answered with some sharpness: —

"But I am not young. I am doing these things for you because of the mother in me. You see I never, never had any one to take care

of before. Papa was always well till the day on which he came home to die. And you never had a mother to care for you?"

"I never had any one."

Janet herself found happiness of a new and almost miraculous kind in caring for Edgar, and during the moment when his helpless, unconscious face lay between her hands, she had known the whole of her love for him.

Yet it was no such love as she had dreamed of. It was not the jubilant recognition of a nature that mated and transcended her own — the sublime response of deep calling unto deep, the utter yielding of spirit that she had waited for ever since that flushed hour of girlhood when love first became a conscious ideal. But so long as this boy wanted her, she would remain at his side, accepting that much warmth and sweetness for the nourishment of her lonely heart. When he needed her no more, he should go easily, and never know the strength of her feeling for him, nor hear the breaking of a cord.

CHAPTER XIX

JANET found herself surprised into a liking for Johnny Stone. He came frequently to see Edgar during the few days after his accident when slight fever kept him at home, and Janet perceived so much kindness in Mr. Stone's rotund and noisy person that she determined to make him an appeal.

Accustomed to the vivacity of his sisters and their friends, Johnny felt some awkwardness in the presence of this delicate woman, with her pure speech and quiet voice, who summoned him to her side one morning just as he was leaving the house.

Among his own set Miss Eversly was felt to belong among that disconcerting class of persons known as the "high brows," but now Johnny thought of her differently. He would have been ashamed to put such a word as "tender" into his limited vocabulary, but had he not been so ashamed, he would have called Janet a tender woman, and unconsciously he

thought of her as such, while he watched her sitting in the shadow of green vines.

But he learned that she was surprisingly frank in spite of her tenderness, for suddenly she told him that she did not approve of him as a friend for Edgar.

After a moment of helpless astonishment, Johnny Stone asked, "Why not?"

"I think you know," said Janet.

Being himself a person of absolute simplicity and directness Mr. Stone admitted by an embarrassed silence that he did. And now Janet spoke to him slowly and gently, seeking to make the unpalatable thing as pleasant as she could.

"You see, you and your friends are different from Edgar. There is some delicacy, perhaps, we will say some weakness in him which there is not in you. It is only because you are young and strong and thoughtless that you play hard and drink, and wish to be, as men say, 'a good sport.' Some day you will outgrow it all and become a steady married man, self-controlled and fond of your home and children; but Edgar does n't gamble and drink just because he is

young and strong. It is deeper than that, for there is some wildness in him, some explosive, and his nerves are quickly aflame. I don't quite know how to explain, but you must know what I mean. What is a diversion to you is a sort of violent, poisonous life to him."

Johnny wrestled with unaccustomed metaphors and finally took refuge in a plain statement.

"We all know that he gets terribly excited and goes it harder than any of us," he said.

"That is just what I mean, and that's why there is danger for him when there is none for you. It is not so certain that he will outgrow his excitability as that you will outgrow your youth, and in the mean time— " She paused. There was something starlike and burning in her eyes as she looked at him, and he realized that this woman, with quiet voice and hands, was excitable too.

"You know that he is trying to win back his place in his father's house, you know that only by steady work and self-control can he do it, and you know that one bad slip now may throw him into vagabondage and ruin. What has hap-

pened before can happen again, and the second time there may be no coming back. Much depends upon himself, but much, oh, very much, Mr. Stone, depends upon his friends." Her voice was no longer quiet and Johnny found it uncomfortably moving.

"What can I do?" he asked, and his face was flushed by unusual sensations.

"Do not ask him to your house so often, and when he comes try to amuse yourselves in some other way than in the ones that are so dangerous to him."

Johnny looked at her with heavy amazement, and now he felt that she was giving him his first mental advantage over her, for she was showing herself utterly ignorant of manly standards and possibilities. But even this knowledge made him uncomfortable, for how was he to explain?

"We could n't do that," he said at last.

"I expected that you would tell me so," she answered, and thereby he lost some of his advantage. "Why can you not do it?"

"It would be impossible."

"Why?"

He looked helplessly about among the vines as though seeking reasons there, and finding none, answered: —

"I can't explain."

"You must explain. When you say that you cannot during a few hours of the week abstain from doing something which may mean ruin for your friend, you must explain why."

"It would n't be — it is n't the kind of thing men do."

"Why not?"

"Edgar would n't like it for one thing. He would be furious if he thought we were stopping drink and cards because he was around; he would feel we were coddling him." And now that Johnny had found his meaning, he gave it to her eagerly. "That's just it, that's what I could n't say a moment ago. We would be coddling him, and when men get together they can't coddle each other or they would n't be manly. Each one must fight for himself, and then it is the survival of the fittest."

"Humanity has found something better than that," Janet answered, but she leaned back and knew herself to be vanquished, for Johnny Stone

had made her partly understand. Janet found it sometimes a weakness to understand so much, for it is only by some obtuseness regarding the ideas of others that we can force a place for our own.

"I wish I could explain better," said Johnny.

"You have explained perfectly what it is to be a man," she answered. "But I am a woman, thank God, and so I need not be ashamed to protect. Most of us are mothers, you know, whether we have children or not. Our protective instinct is our strongest. I am very fond of him, — I am a childless woman, — and I warn you that in me you see an enemy, for I intend to save that boy if I can, and from what you say I find that I can only save him by keeping him away from you."

"I do not believe that will be difficult," said Johnny quite gravely, and without conscious attempt at giving a compliment.

"I hope not," answered Janet.

"When he does come I will try and see that things don't get too gay."

"Thank you; I shall be very grateful if you do that much."

He rose then to go, and Janet felt that she had achieved as much as could have been expected. But Johnny Stone had left her with an anxious heart, and the added realization of what temptations her boy must fall into whenever he sought normal companionship with his friends.

CHAPTER XX

WHILE Edgar's arm was mending, Janet felt so well that she reconsidered her decision to consult a doctor that summer. "He might send me to the hospital at once," she said, "and if I obeyed him, think of the wasted summer days! Think of the dreadfulness of being shut up in a hospital while warmth and flowers and lovely summer stars and moons are outside. It would be best to be cut up when the leaves and the flowers are gone, and there are gloomy mists and horrid chilly drops of water falling from the roof. If the doctor says, 'Wait,' I might as well not have gone to him, and if he says, 'Operate,' and I disobey him, I might as well not have gone to him—so I think I'll not go."

And now the "pageant of summer" was nearing its moment of consummation. Far away in woods and meadows, farther than one could see or think, the world was gathering strength and beauty. Disastrous winds had fallen and days of great still heat lay upon the earth.

The Way of the Wind

It was long ago that hylas had piped shrilly from cool, dark marshes, — long ago that the chaste, slim, frosty moon had hung in spring skies, — long ago that Janet had wondered if life ever again would hold magic for her.

Now the red-eyed vireo warbled all day in the sugar-maple, and the hot air tingled with the cicada's song. The earth steamed with sweet vapors from clover and sweetfern, pine needles and the sap of trees and grasses.

At morning flocks of thunderclouds lay upon the western horizon, they were distant and faint as dreams; but as other colors paled in the white-hot glare of noon, sometimes the clouds remained flushed, and would mount higher into the blue until they became as a portent of tragedy, a possible event of terror and splendor hovering through the consciousness of still glowing hours.

At night the growing moon filled her arms with gold till the stars grew pale and the ways of heaven were bare when she moved through them. The wooded earth lay dark and tranquil under shining, immeasurable skies.

All night the shadows of giant hollyhocks lay

black and sharp upon the floor of Fanny Chilworth's hall, and beyond the doorway they stood in stately rows.

Janet sat among them watching the moon through their stiff, slim forms. Now and then a breeze moved so that they leaned toward one another, rustling and whispering together.

The woman whose ancestors had heard banshees upon the Irish moors wondered half humorously what the flowers were saying and felt that in some unrecognized, inarticulate part of herself she knew.

When the breeze had passed, the garden lay still as though frozen by some enchantment. Where the pale-blue larkspur stood by day, there hovered, a dim, nebulous presence. A white cosmos seemed to have shed its stem and floated free of earthly contact,—its silver, inviolate flowers poised motionless above multitudes of dark tiny shapes and cobwebs of light.

Presently Edgar came and sat on a step at her feet in the dim garden. At first he did not speak or look at her, and the moonlight shining into his eyes showed them dark and unhappy. Finally his voice came, very low and shaken:

he had not thought loving her could be like this; he had not thought a man could suffer so. He had meant to arrange his life so that there could be no room in it for anything but his work and caring for her, but now he found that loving took away his breath so that he could not work.

Janet had hoped to control him, to purify and soothe the heat of his young blood, and to hold him by his heart and his spirit, but now she saw her folly.

"Then I must love you," she said, "or go away."

"Oh, love me, love me! Are you still afraid? What more can I do to prove how I am willing to live for your sake?"

"Live longer — and longer yet, and then — you see — it might be too late."

"How could it be too late while we both live?"

"There would be younger women. And there would be yourself — your wild, unstable, swift-moving self that has never stood long by any good or any bad thing."

"What can I do to make you believe? How long must I live like this before you trust me?

If I were dying, — if you knew I could not live to hurt or forget you, — could you tell me anything different?"

And so his voice went on, pleading, insistent, filling Janet's summer night with a wild, warm feeling that made her emotionally dizzy. She rose at last and told him the end must come.

Then he followed her through the garden — repentant, humbled, in fear that this night might really be the end.

"You must n't mind if sometimes I am unhappy — I did not know — I did not know that it would be like this!"

She opened the garden gate ahead of him and paused, for she could not endure to leave him so comfortless. Her hand lay pale and slim upon the latch. He bent and kissed it gently.

"See, I am quiet again," he said. "See, I am what you wish!" And now his voice too was subdued and humble. "You must n't mind if loving you sometimes takes my breath away. I was unprepared — but I am not afraid of suffering. It will be enough if you let me go on caring, and being with you. There will be little things that I can do for you —" He touched

her sleeve. "Let me be with you and do what I can to make you happy. I won't ask anything else. Don't send me away —"

With an inevitable movement her hand touched his head, and like a child, he nestled his face against her palm.

CHAPTER XXI

In the late summer Janet was overtaken by her enemy. It came upon her during a night of ferocious wind, and the wind and pain seemed to wake her together. At first she could not disentangle them, but seemed to be horribly and confusedly tossed till full consciousness came, with an onslaught of physical suffering that brought her gasping to her feet, and to a realization that the thing she feared had overtaken her at last.

This was different from anything she had yet suffered, but at first she tried to be quiet and wait till morning before disturbing the house. If she was not quiet, she at least waited alone for some hours while the tumult without and the tumult within waxed and waned.

There were moments when the bellowing wind that shook and wrestled with her chamber was almost more dreadful to her than the enemy within herself, and then pain and nausea beset her and topped all else in her consciousness.

It was six o'clock when she rose and made her way along the hall to Miss Chilworth's room, where, knocking at the locked door, she called out that she was ill.

After that Janet felt herself to be so sunken in physical sensations that she was little more than an animal, groveling in a trough of dreadful pain, her being rent and devastated by it, and she did not care what they did over her, or whether or not she was going to die, or that Edgar's voice was heard at her door.

Other voices, hurried and dismayed, spoke above her, and through them she heard Fanny's — in control of herself and in command of the situation. Annie — the waitress — who broke into a loud wail was sternly silenced by her mistress and ordered from the room.

Somehow Janet was able to feel sorry for Annie and to say, "Let her stay, Fanny. I don't mind if she cries, and I think it — very sweet of her — to want to." Then she relapsed again till there came a strange man into the room, who seemed to handle her person brutally, and after a brief question or two, did something to her arm and the pain began to recede. Then in

a marvelous and beatific freedom from it, she slept.

The first thing that came to her on awakening was that the dreadful wind had fallen silent, and then that her body had ceased to be tormented. Fanny was there, and told her that a great specialist had been summoned to operate upon her.

"How shall I ever afford it?" said Janet; "and what dreadful trouble I shall be to you."

Fanny, with evident sincerity, said that the trouble was nothing and that she must not worry about the expense, which could be arranged later.

Janet allowed herself to drop the subject temporarily, and now her thoughts, which were perfectly clear, recognized the re-approach of physical turmoil, and she asked to see Edgar.

"I want to see him alone," she told Fanny boldly. "I don't think that I am going to die, but I may, and I think, if I could speak to him now, what I say might help him and you — afterwards — in case —"

"Janet, you must n't talk so! You must not think of dying! If I lost you I should lose what

I care most for in all the world." There were tears in Miss Chilworth's eyes, and Janet was both touched and discomforted by her emotion, for she could not, either now or ever, come to feel that Fanny was more to her than all else in the world. What chiefly emerged from her friend's trouble was the fact that she must be more ill than she supposed, and that serious complications had been discovered.

The physician's daughter could have asked questions which would have shown her the truth, but she forbore to waste time, for it was necessary that she speak with Edgar before the anguish returned upon her.

Fanny protested slightly, for she feared the interview might be too exciting. "And if you grow feverish it will complicate things a good deal," she said.

"I shall be much more excited if you don't let me have my own way," answered Janet, who felt that fever was already in her veins, and was the more determined to see Edgar as she realized the gravity of her condition.

He had gone to the resident doctor's house to bring back ether and other necessities for the

operation, and by the time he came back she was restless and flushed and her brown hair was loosened from its braids by much tossing.

He was grave, pale, and still as he knelt by her bed.

"You sent for me?"

She drew herself nearer to the edge of the bed and put out a hot hand to his. "You know that I am very ill."

"But you are going to be better — better than you ever were."

"Yes. I have no idea of dying — I have not sent for you to make me any deathbed promises; but we cannot tell, you know, and if I should not come back to you, I want you to remember how much I cared — how much I wanted you to win your fight, and not be weak or wild — how much I wanted you to live up to your best — to the man I have known. Do you think you could remember that? Oh, I want it very much! Do you think you could remember?" Much against her will she was beginning to sob.

The boy's face quivered as though in torment, and he hid it against the edge of her bed. Then Janet put out her hand and touched his hair.

Even through her illness she felt the giving of this caress to be deeply, unimaginably sweet.

"I am not going to die," she said, a little tremulously, "but if — in case anything should go wrong —"

He lifted a stricken face, and her hand slipped to his shoulder —

"If I — if I don't come back, you must n't drink or gamble any more."

"No."

"And if I live, you must n't drink or gamble any more!"

"No."

"Poor Edgar, there is no chance for you either way!"

His head was tossed backwards and his eyes, veiled under slightly fallen lids, were adoring and beseeching. It seemed as though in some deep convulsion of his nature he were yielding her up his soul.

"I don't ask you to promise, but only to remember — how I cared."

"I will remember," he cried wildly, "you know — you know that I will! Say that you know!"

She smiled at him and then sank back among the pillows as though exhausted and satisfied.

"I am going to get well," she said weakly, but with a gleam of mirth, "and then you will be sorry for what I made you say. I shall have to get well soon to walk up the mountain with you on Sundays, so that you won't want to be with Johnny Stone."

She seemed very happy as she lay among the white linen and the soft mass of her loosened hair. "You must go now," she told him.

"There will never be any more of those things Johnny Stone used to mean for me," he said.

"Hush, hush! You must n't say what you might be sorry for as soon as you have ceased being sorry for me. But try to do as I wish for your own sake, and for mine a little too. I should like to think you did it for me. You see how vain I am even at this moment."

"It will be all for you. Everything that I do and think will always be for you."

"Hush!"

"Everything — so long as I live. Whether you — whether —" He choked, and drawing

her hand to his lips kissed the palm of it with desperate, heartbroken kisses.

Then Janet knew that she must be very ill. The boy's anguish told her so, as well as her consciousness of rising fever.

"I don't intend to die," she said. "Don't think that we shall not climb the mountain together yet. But if I don't come back — if this should happen to be the end for us — I want you to know how much I cared!"

"Not as I care."

"Yes! Yes!" She lifted herself. "Look at me. I love you — I love you in all the ways that one person can love another, as mother, as friend, as sister — there is no human way of loving that I do not feel for you; but most of all I love you as a woman loves the man whose wife she — she — Yes, you may kiss me, but quietly — My boy! My boy! It seems as if you must have known how often I longed to take your head into my arms as I take it now, and to touch your hair — as I touch it now — and to make you look happy. And now you are not happy because you think I am going to die; but I am not!" And suddenly she cried wildly,

"Edgar, Edgar! Don't let them take me away from you! Don't let them!"

In a conflagration of their being they kissed, and kissed again, Janet sobbing and caressing him desperately, till he was forced into self-control by his fear for her, and for this one hour of their lives became morally the stronger. He quieted her by his voice and hands, and ultimately laid her back upon the bed; smiling into her eyes until she smiled back, and murmured that she was happy, — "Was he happy too?"

At his answer she smiled again and closed her eyes, holding his hand, asking him not to go away till the doctor came, and to come back when he had gone — to come back soon — soon.

CHAPTER XXII

THERE were days in which it seemed as if Janet were slipping out of the summer world, but she was not to die. By the time that a night of frost had first breathed crimson upon the trees, and they stood mystically flushed under September sunshine, she was able to be lifted in bed and look at them.

Edgar had been often in her room; his swift, young footsteps quiet as a woman's, and all his ardors smothered. Only once did he look at her with shining eyes, and Janet's eyes answered. They were alone a moment and he came to her bedside.

"It was true, then?"

"Yes."

He stooped and kissed her hand, but did not shake her by any emotional appeal, or seek to touch her.

"You must be thinner than I am," she said.

"You have almost killed me," he answered.

There was deep peace in Janet's spirit as she lay watching the autumn woods. Edgar

brought her pansies from the garden. He laid them across her knees, and knelt by her side as on a certain day she should never forget, and, as then, he pushed back the edge of a ruffled pillow that the wind had blown against her face.

Tenderness for her kept him grave and it was some days before he could smile easily over little things.

Strength flowed into Janet like rising tides. Then came the moment when Edgar was allowed to carry her downstairs, and that other when she took her first steps over the grass leaning upon his arm.

When she had rested from this excursion he told her that he had found a place where they could build a cottage.

"A cottage?"

"Yes; for us to live in next summer. I have made a drawing of it. See." He drew it from under his vest where he had kept it in hiding for some days.

"It's a love of a house," said Janet; and indeed it was. The boy's pencil seemed to have passed over it like a caress, adding detail upon detail in the way of vine and path. Any one

looking at such a house would say, "People have been happy there."

Janet and Edgar bent their heads over it like children.

"We will have roses here," said Janet.

"And here," said Edgar, "is where I shall see you waiting for me when I come home at night."

"It almost frightens me to be so happy," she told him once. "It can't last like this, and when it goes —"

"Why should it go?"

"Things do."

"Not always. Why should our happiness go? How can it?"

Partly because she was still so weak and her emotions like things that hung loose in the wind, Janet had moments of morbidness when she looked at the picture of their little house and wondered if they would ever walk down the boxwood path, or sit together at evening on the steps under the doorway of their dream.

The autumn was one which grew quickly cold. There came gray, chilly rains that washed color from the trees, and winds that sent hosts of dead leaves scampering and chattering across

the terrace of "Green Acres." Janet watched them often from where she lay warmly tucked into a reclining chair, and there came no reflection of the dying season on her face. She no longer looked tired, and the tiny impresses of passing years had vanished. Through her delicacy there shone a radiance, and often she seemed to dream. In the movement of her hands there was a caress, though she only touched a flower, or lingered by Fanny to bid her goodnight. She walked as though crowned — a woman who knew herself to be beloved.

Bitterness was in Fanny's heart as she watched her brother and her friend. They looked into each other's eyes and laughed over nothing, or they looked and were grave as though sublimated when others laughed. If by chance their hands touched, it was an event. At all times their faces showed preoccupation remote from the world.

It seemed to Fanny that they were in a trance, and that love was like a fever, or the infusion of a foreign chemical essence, or some quite abnormal condition generated in the life of man.

Since that hour of bewilderment and anger

when Janet had given her the incredible information of her approaching marriage to Edgar, Fanny woke daily to the knowledge that she had always been a lonely woman. Janet had whispered the news before she had been able to lift her head from Miss Chilworth's pillows. Fanny's displeasure had been necessarily curbed by the fear of injuring Janet, and later it was suppressed by the fear of losing her friendship. But she lived in mortification that this thing should have grown unperceived under her eyes, and the suspicion that Janet felt her to have been obtuse added to her bitterness.

It has been said that if one met Shakespeare upon the Elysian Fields and told him that some of his lines were bad, he would smilingly answer that he knew it, and did not care. There are others who discover themselves to have been stupid, and can laugh. But Fanny Chilworth was not one of these. The loss of self-esteem caused her a pain as though her very state of being were menaced — as though she were conscious of a meagerness in herself and feared further belittling.

Then Fanny loved Janet. Tenderness was not a thing which flourished easily upon her soil, and its springing up had caused some actual dislocation to her life. She was often conscious of feelings which she lacked the suppleness to express and which yet teased her by their desire to find expression. And Janet had taught her that she might sometimes play. She had never been conscious that her life was bleak, but seeing it by the life Janet made, she knew that it had been so.

Now her companion was snatched away. She had gone unaccountably with the person Fanny most despised, and dwelt with him in a radiant, unaccountable world.

Janet and Edgar — it was monstrous! Where was Janet's dignity that she could marry a boy of his age? What were her ideals of conduct that she could utterly love one who had shown himself as Edgar had done?

Janet was duped. Black magic had struck her. Was it human nature and propinquity, or illness, that had made her so accessible to Edgar's charm? In any case Fanny felt that her friend had shown a lack of balance — a lack

almost of intelligence, and this was the one unadmitted comfort in Miss Chilworth's autumn.

Events began to move swiftly. From the architect to whom Edgar's drawings were finally sent, came an encouraging answer. He thought the boy had something unusual. There was room for him in the office if he cared to come on trial and show what, if anything, there was in him.

Between Edgar and this prospect there rose at once the specter of sheep, and the money Fanny had already put down for their equipment.

"So this is to be another project abandoned," said his sister bitterly, and for several days her face wore a look which Janet felt to be unnecessarily "sad, high, and working: full of state and woe."

Yet Fanny was not undeserving of pity. Ground had been staked out, a well had been dug, her property, both in land and money, had been used for nothing. And to Miss Chilworth property appeared as a thing somehow sacred in itself, quite apart from its value in happiness or service.

"Do you think Edgar had better refuse the town office?" asked Janet.

"It does n't matter what I think," answered Edgar's sister. "My opinion would not be regarded." This was the only moment in which she was actually disagreeable.

It was agreed that Edgar should go to the city and try his new adventure. Janet was to stay with Fanny and grow strong in the mountain air of the late autumn, and in this way Miss Chilworth hoped to regain her friend.

The last day came. It was cold and sunny. A boisterous wind romped out of the northwest. Shining evergreen needles sang as they swung, but other trees were bare save where dry oak leaves still hugged their branches. The mountain seemed nearer than usual and devoid of mysteries. In the absence of summer verdure, spruce trees could be counted upon it in tiny sharp points of green.

Janet looked at its scarred granite head.

"How I should like to breathe the air up there!" she said, "and look away — away —"

"We will be there together next year," said Edgar.

They walked to and fro upon the terrace.

"When shall we walk here again?" she wondered.

"Soon, soon," he answered. "Next Sunday. I shall come up every Sunday." And he turned his warm, confident, young eyes upon her. Never had he seemed more dear or his hopes so full and high. The shining armor of his young spirit was as though girded for new adventure.

Janet herself looked almost boyish with a white, high-collared sweater buttoned under her chin, and her face rounder and fresher than it had been for months. To her dark, loosely coiled hair there clung part of a colored leaf that had been caught in a scramble through some bushes. She walked with one hand in Edgar's pocket where it met and held his.

In that moment they were merely happy comrades, and the burden of heat and ecstasy which is part of love was lifted from them. Edgar talked of his plans, of the buildings he would design, of the day when he would lead the firm which he was about to enter on probation.

Under the terrace wall he finally spread a rug

for her in the sun, and there they were silent for a while, sitting side by side, Janet leaning against him. It was warm and very still. Insects chirped cozily about them in the grass, and from far off came the caw of a crow hovering over an empty cornfield.

Things seemed close and safe in a bright, peaceful world; but now Janet was tired, and a little shadow fell across her spirit.

"Edgar," she said, very low, "there is one thing I fear."

He was instantly grave.

"Something that you fear for me?"

"Yes. Not when I am with you, but when you are alone, or with other men who used to be your companions. Edgar, you won't touch those things which have almost destroyed you in the past?"

"I don't want them," he said, turning quickly, as though eager to share some triumph with her. "I have n't wanted them since the day when I began to hope you might care."

There was no answering triumph on Janet's face. She leaned against his shoulder and closed her eyes.

"I would rather hear that you had wanted them and kept away," she said.

"You don't understand how I love you or you would not think of them at all. The other day I happened to see for the first time, what I might have seen any day, carved over the church door: 'In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire,' and I thought: 'That is what her love is to me.' Then it did not seem quite that, for it is inside of me — my very inmost self. I used to crave drink and cards as I craved riding hard over the prairies — because I needed their excitement. Life was tame and dull, like food without taste, but drink or cards or wild riding gave me emotion. It gave me times of extraordinary happiness and triumph. I felt a king; the world was mine. But now you are my emotion. You are my great adventure. What day can be dull or hard or tasteless when I know that you are waiting for me at the end of it? When I hold you in my arms, we are together at the world's heart. What more could I want from the world, when I have its heart?"

Janet did not answer or stir. It seemed as

though she suffered from a chill which his heat was powerless to warm.

"Can I only be sure of you when I give you adventure?" she asked.

"You can be sure always while you love me, and afterwards — if there must be an afterwards — for I would rather die by my own hand than live to see you ashamed of me again."

Janet's face with its closed eyes still lay motionless on his shoulder; but her fingers groped along his sleeve till she met his hand and then she held it close.

CHAPTER XXIII

JANET never remembered how she had felt on that day when the change came—what preparation there had been in the elements that composed her life — what warning shadow or ironic joy had been flung across it.

Nature prepares herself augustly for events. Great storms send messengers of wind or terrifying silence to make way for them. There are portents among the clouds, and mighty breathings over the earth before a season changes. Day and night are ushered in by signs and wonders, movements of stars, gleams of light hinting at that which never was on land or sea. But the climaxes in human lives come unheralded. Sorrow and joy walk over ungarnished thresholds.

So it was with Janet. The weather and the day were without event. Her emotions were nondescript. She was not consciously thinking even of Edgar as she sat on a bank resting, and looking across the road into some young spruce trees that crowded outward toward

the highway, saw a human figure tumbled there.

Her nerves, still weak from illness, shook her for a moment of fear and shrinking before she mastered them and crossed the road. A woman lay crumpled up as she had fallen. One might have mistaken her for a bundle of old clothes, but for a mop of fair untidy hair, and a hand that lay stretched upon the ground.

Janet thought that she might be dead, and horror almost mastered her. But there was no house near enough for her call to reach. She put her hand on the woman's shoulder, to find it warm, and just then the figure moved. The face that lifted itself was young, haggard, and in a subtle way debased. Yet it seemed that Nature had not intended it to be without delicacy and appeal.

Lifting herself to a sitting posture by one arm, the girl fixed dazed eyes upon Janet.

"Who are you?" she asked thickly.

"I was passing," said Janet. "I thought you looked ill."

Her sense of repulsion was almost a sickness. About the girl there hung the odor which had

been horrible to her since that night when Edgar had brought it home from his party with Johnny Stone.

This woman seemed hardly human, and finding her alive Janet was leaving her, when she shivered.

"I guess I'm cold," she muttered. "I guess I'm sick too."

Her words were not spoken in appeal, and when she had drawn herself together and clasped her arms about her knees, she looked at Janet with eyes in which there grew hostility and caution.

"What are you standing there for?" she asked; then appeared to forget her and shivered again. "Gosh!" she said. "It's cold."

Janet carried a cape and she now put this over the girl's shoulders.

"You must get up," she said, but the girl sat on, looking ahead of her with an expression of one who physically and mentally tastes some bitter food.

Janet saw that her brain was still thick from the effects of liquor; but she could not leave her shivering and muttering so.

"You must get up," she said again.

"Who are you?" cried the girl with sudden shrillness. "Who are you to tell me what I ought to do?" Then, looking at her with awakening intelligence, there came a laugh into her eyes.

"Why!" she cried, "you look like one of those things that call themselves ladies."

"Never mind what I am," said Janet. "You will die if you sit any longer on this ground."

"I don't mind who you are, if you don't mind who I am," said the girl, "but I don't want any one spying on me and getting me locked up for nothing. I don't mind either if I die," she added.

Janet felt that it might be best to let her do so, but as this was impossible she spoke again.

"You can't stay here or you will be locked up," she said. "Listen. A few steps farther on there is an open pasture where the sun shines. You can get warm there and drink from the brook. Then, if you feel better, you can come to the house where I live, and have something to eat."

"I am not hungry," said the girl sullenly, "and I have n't been a beggar yet."

"I have given meals to lots of people who were not beggars," answered Janet, who was forgetting her repulsion. "Now, be good, and come into the sunshine." She held out her hand and the girl rose as though hypnotized.

"Gosh, but I'm stiff!" she exclaimed.

Stiff and cold and ill — she certainly seemed all of these as she followed Janet to the pasture where there was sunshine. Here she knelt willingly by the brook and drank and washed her face while Janet sat and waited. Then she sought to tidy her hair and collar, and approached Janet with a manner that tried to hide shyness under bravado.

"I guess I'm game for a few more good times," she said, "and I thank you for the coat."

The thickness that blurred her features on waking had somewhat gone. Her face was fair and thin, and seemed not without charm, though a subtle debasement was still apparent. The tones of her voice were common and debased also; but she spoke as one who has been to school.

"You had better keep the cloak until you are warmed through," said Janet. "Sit down here. Perhaps I can help you somehow. If you care to tell me anything about yourself, do so. If not, I will go away."

"Why should I want to tell you anything?" asked the girl, still defending herself.

"I don't know," Janet smiled up at her. "I don't know. Perhaps you do; but then again perhaps you don't."

She sat down and began to pull up dry grass with one hand while she looked at Janet and then away, and then at Janet again.

"You might n't think it, because I have n't a wedding ring," she said slyly, "but I am married."

"Have n't you a good husband?"

"Good!" The word seemed to amuse her. "I don't know about his being good exactly — not as you mean it; but he's sweet! He's a honey boy! A woman could no more help loving him than help breathing, if he wanted her to. He did n't want me to, though. He just wanted a good time. He did n't do me harm either. He could n't. He came too late for that.

He just married me one night for a lark. We had both been drinking. He had been drinking hardest, and I guess he does n't know he really married me. He won't know either for all me. I don't want to spoil his life. You see, he's a gentleman."

"Hush," Janet interrupted quickly. "You must n't tell me this. I asked about you because you were in trouble and I might have helped, but I can't listen to this."

"Oh!" — the girl gave a rough sound of contempt. "Don't I tell you I won't give him away? I love him. I guess a woman like you can't imagine what it is to love like I do. You would always be loving something more than the man. It might be what the world thought of you, or it might be money, or it might be right and wrong; but I guess there's only one thing I care for more than him and that's his being happy and not living to hate me. If he loved some girl of his own kind now, and I up and said, 'You can't have her. You're mine,' why — you could n't say what he'd do with the shame and all. He's like that. You could n't say what he'd do. He might kill me. He might

kill himself. He don't fear death any more than he fears a mouse. You'd ought to see him ride. My Gawd! You'd ought to see him ride on the cussedest broncho in the State, and round up young bulls at daybreak. 'You'll kill yourself,' I screamed, and he caught me up and set me in front of him. 'A short life and a merry one,' he said, and there was something doing on that horse for a while before it rolled. He was scared then. He thought he'd killed me, and I was pretty sick that night. He was sweet to me. He would n't let any one else take care of me, and he would n't lie down for fear he'd fall asleep. I was n't as sick as I made out, because it was so nice to have him sorry for me and looking as though he loved me. It was nice, too, having the other boys coming round — stepping soft — to ask how I was. He was sweet to me that night! I'll never forget. I wish I'd died then leaning against his arm with his voice saying, 'Does it hurt still.' He could n't bear to have anything hurt. 'Does it hurt as bad as ever, Mary,' he asked. I could hear a coyote crying out somewhere. The sound came in through the cabin door, and the prairie wind

came too. It was sweet. I wish I'd died then. After that I was his girl for a while. I'd followed him out West, and now I've followed him back, but I'm not going to bother him. I just want to be near and see him sometimes. If you could find me a place where I could earn enough to keep alive, I would be good. Lawd! I don't want to be anything else! So long as I can keep away from booze it makes me sick to think of any other man. I can cook for farmhands and I can clean up — and if I could see him, I would n't bother him any; but I can't seem to live unless I know what's happening to him. Say, would you like to see what he looks like?"

Drawing a dirty photograph from the bosom of her dress, she stared suddenly at Janet.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I have been ill —"

"My! you look it!"

Janet put out her hand. "Show me," she said. "Show me what he looks like."

"My! but you do look sick!" repeated the girl wonderingly, gazing at Janet as she passed the photograph into her hands. Then, still

looking at the face now bent over the picture, she saw it change so that she cried out shrilly, —

"You know him!"

Janet's lips moved to make the word "Yes," but no sound came from them. She dropped the photograph, and her nerveless hands lay palms upward in her lap while she stared at the now terrified girl.

"So I've given him away! I've given him away!" she whispered, and kept on staring at Janet, who seemed stricken as though by some barbaric hand. The sunny meadow was still, for both women sat quiet with their knowledge between them.

"Is he your brother?" whispered the girl.

"No."

"You ain't — my Gawd — you ain't married to him!"

"No."

"But you —" Her voice fell on the words. She crawled across the space that separated her from Janet and peered up into her face.

"But you love him — the way I do."

For an instant Janet was braced by recoil.

Traditions of race and living came to lash her into life. Love him as this girl did! This — What could there be between them? What but an abyss of terrible, unspeakable defilement!

Mary was on her knees in the grass whispering things.

"Say — I'll go away if he loves you too. I guess you might make him happy. Was you going to be married?"

Suddenly Janet saw the girl as another woman like herself.

"Was you going to be married?"

"Why, yes," said Janet, "we were." She was too stunned to feel much, but Mary moaned and rocked herself to and fro. First she cried, "He has forgot me! He has forgot me!" And then, "I have given him away! I have spoiled his life! He will hate me!"

Janet covered her face with her hands. She seemed to taste the blood of her heart in her mouth. For some time she sat so and the girl became quiet again.

"Say —" Janet felt a touch on her arm. "It was n't true what I told you about our being married. I was sore because you looked down

on me, and so I told you I was married to make you look at me different."

Janet dropped her hands from her face.

"We're not married," continued Mary. "He would n't marry a girl like me, he — a gentleman." Her voice faltered. "We're not married. We're not —"

The lie was more apparent with every repetition of it, and they let it fall between them without comment.

"You won't tell," said Mary, after another pause. She had withdrawn her hand and crouched, looking at Janet with eyes in which excitement began to rise like a storm. "If you won't tell, there's no harm done. I'll go away. I'll go back West. He'll never see me or hear from me again. I'll keep on being dead to him the way I am now. I could n't live and have him curse me. You marry him and keep still about me. You must care enough for him for that — just to keep still and make him happy. Say — you will keep still, won't you? You won't let on you've seen me, and spoil everything? My Gawd — why do you stare at me so? You can't mean —"

The girl drew her breath in quickly and beat her hands together.

"You can't mean you'll speak if I am willing to keep quiet! Don't you know him well enough to know that he's dangerous when he's headed wrong? He's dangerous. He'd get himself locked up or hanged maybe. He's the kind that does. And you won't keep still to save him? How much do you love him, anyway? Why don't you speak? Why don't you tell me what you mean to do?"

Then Janet rose with a loud cry.

"My poor boy! My poor boy!"

CHAPTER XXIV

It happened that his arms came about her and his lips were on hers before the day was over and before she had had time to think out the horror.

Laughter came with his kisses. "I wanted to surprise you. We have a half-holiday. Are you glad? Are you glad?"

Passive in his arms Janet kept saying, "Edgar. I have seen Mary. I have seen Mary. I have seen Mary!"

It was some moments before he noticed her words. "Who is Mary?" he said at last. "We don't want her whoever she is." Then again in another tone: "Who is Mary?"

Janet lifted her head from his arm, and seeing her face he cried out, "My God! What is it?"

"It's Mary. Have there been so many in your life that you don't know which she is?"

Staring at her he passed his hand slowly over his forehead. "Mary — Mary —" he repeated. "Ah!"

The words on his lips had roused a familiar echo. Janet saw that now he remembered.

"The girl out West?"

Janet nodded. She kept her hand at her throat, and in an anguish of fear she watched Edgar to see if he betrayed more guilt than Mary had admitted for him. To his questions she gave answers in a lifeless voice, which seemed to utter dry and deadly things.

"What does the girl want?"

"Nothing."

"Then why did she come to you?"

"It just — happened."

"What is she doing here?"

"Hunting for you."

Dismay, anger, and sorrow were with Edgar; but no knowledge of the complete devastation that was to come. He could even think of Fanny, who might be near, and he asked where she was.

On hearing that she had gone for the day, he took Janet to the library where a fire burned as on that evening so long ago when she had first come to his home, wondering at his exile. Seating himself beside her, he bowed his head into his hands.

"It is horrible that such a ghost should rise. But you know — I never pretended —"

"Mary is n't a ghost."

"But she has no claim. I never did her a real injury — I mean —"

He came to a miserable pause before lifting his head resolutely.

"I won't have you suffer and myself misunderstood for the sake of protecting a woman who would n't care about being protected," he said. "Mary was n't the kind of a girl I could have injured."

"I know — she told me."

"That was — that was fine of her," murmured Edgar. He gazed ahead of him very unhappy, stricken, and ashamed. Suddenly he cried out, "Janet, is all this going to make you care for me less? Is Mary coming between us?"

"She says she is your wife," Janet told him.

Edgar leaped from his chair. "My wife!" he shouted, and laughed angrily. "This is absurd! Where is the girl? She must have been drinking. Janet, it is n't possible that you —"

He turned and she put out her hand to him. She smiled, and then began to weep naturally

with her forehead against his arm as he stood beside her.

"You did n't know, then! You did n't deceive me! I have been so afraid! My dear! my dear! I have been so afraid! It seemed that I scarcely lived. That we should not have our home together, that our perfect happiness could never be again—this, I could bear and live. But if you had known you were married and had kept it from me, thinking the girl lost or dead, — if you had been base, — then I would have lost you — then I could not have had even a decent memory. Oh, may God never again give me such suffering as I have had this day! But the day is done! You are mine, and the warmth has come back to my body and my soul! What comes we can face together."

Edgar stood rigidly. "I don't think I know what you are talking about," he said. "The only thing I am clear about is that you easily think me base."

"No! No!" She lifted her face and saw him gazing out of the window as though seeing nothing at all. "Edgar, Mary believes herself to be your wife."

His anger returned. "She is mad! Don't speak that word again in her connection." He drew his arm from her roughly. "Is it possible that you believe her?"

"I believe that Mary is your wife."

Furious, estranged, he now stood looking at her from across the room.

"You take her word against mine? You fear that I am base, because a stray girl —"

"Edgar! Don't be angry with me." She put the palms of her hands together like a child. "Edgar, she said that you would not remember. She said that — that —" Janet avoided his eyes not to see the shame in them. Her voice sank almost to a whisper. "She said that you had both been drinking; but that you had been drinking more than she, and that you thought it was a lark, but that it turned out to be real."

Janet still avoided looking at him, and only knew that he made no sound. After a while she spoke again. "I asked her more questions and she told me — Do you remember the night of the raid at Bill — somebody —"

"Bill O'Rook?"

"That was the name." Edgar's voice had

come to her hoarse and fallen. "You and Mary escaped."

"I remember."

"You went to the hotel. There were strangers there, and more drinking. — It happened then."

Edgar began to speak very slowly. "The next morning," he said, "I remember that a man dressed as a clergyman spoke to me as he left the hotel. He asked me how I liked being a bridegroom. I thought surely he joked."

"He wrote to Mary saying that she was married with witnesses and left his address in case she wanted to prove it."

"She has come here to claim me?"

"No, no. She claims nothing."

"Does she want to prove it?"

"No. She will never — 'bother' you."

The early autumn twilight was in the room before either of them spoke again. Janet saw him seated, a dark shape, bowed in the glow of a dying fire. She herself felt suddenly rested and returned to normal living. Her boy was still spiritually hers, and now she could see hope that had not appeared during the first hours

of a shock that had almost paralyzed her, weak as she was from illness.

It was monstrous that such a marriage could be allowed to stand, if indeed it could be proved legal. She wondered why she had not seen this at once, and almost smiled at her stupidity. She must tell him. The dark room was warm, and the firelight was almost a comfort.

"Edgar."

He rose stiffly, and coming to her turned on a light. "I want to see you," he said. She had watched torturing shame move upon his face before, but never such a look as the desolate one which the light now revealed.

With a little cry she put up her hands to hide his face, but he drew them down and bent over them.

"Shame!" he said. "Shame, disgrace, drunkenness, loose women — and you — These are the things I have brought to you. You look nearly dead of them."

He forced her to lie on the sofa, and knelt by her feet. "And I dared to be angry with you because you doubted me. I am not fit —" He choked.

She spoke his name, and put out her hands to him. At that he slowly kissed her feet. He kissed her hands, first one and then the other. He kissed her hair, her forehead, her eyelids, but did not touch her lips. For a moment he broke down and wept like a child with his head on her breast.

Then he was gone.

BOOK SECOND

CHAPTER I

Miss Abigail lived behind the purple window panes that were made before our Revolution. Her house was so near the foot of Beacon Hill that she could hear the thunder of traffic on that street where authors had once walked and mused peacefully. Across the way from her windows were ancient historic elms, now diminished and deformed by the chopping of their withered limbs. Near the delicately pillared doorway of her colonial house there was a brilliantly modern pharmacy, and up and down her sidewalk there passed constant streams of commercial persons. Motors screamed and strove as they mounted the once stately hill; but Miss Abigail never thought of moving.

It was from this house that she had said good-bye to the boy who was to have been her husband, but who fell by one of the first Southern bullets. It was under these old trees that she had seen him pass to his regiment, and now in the quiet of early morning she sometimes could think she saw him there still. This was

because she was old, and returned, during the last days of her life, to the hoarded memories of her years when the flame of existence had been so strong and warm. But during the long years that had come between, Miss Abigail had not either openly or secretly given her days to mourning. She had gone about life finding in it much to interest her, and within the limits of a notoriously ingrowing community she had seen much of human nature and grown wise and sweet on her knowledge of it.

When her niece Janet took refuge in the cramp of city surroundings from the spaces of field and sky where her life's story seemed to have been lived and ended, it was to Miss Abigail, and only to her, that she came and told her history.

The girl Mary had disappeared, and Janet had never heard Edgar's voice since his heart-broken confession of shame, remorse, and — as she now understood it to have been — his farewell. He had left his home for the second time that night and without seeing her again. That he intended never to see her — never again to cross her life and bring upon it the trail of his

unworthy and occasionally vicious past—was now her torturing conviction.

During dark and silent hours while the household slept, he seemed to have kept solitary vigil. A great fire had been lit and had burned itself away. Cigarette stubs lay everywhere. But the hearth was cold, and when the maid found them, some of them were warm; so he must have been many hours without the firelight, and had left only when sounds of footsteps told him that the day was begun.

In the armchair, near his mother's picture, he must have sat long, for here the wreckage of cigarettes was greatest. Some were almost consumed; others flung down hardly burned. His pipe was gone from its place on the mantel, and Janet, with a cry, saw that his mother's picture was also gone.

She knew then that he would not come back. He had renounced her and his home, and the career that was to have won him his way to the world's respect and respectability. His overcharged nature had broken loose again under the torment of shame, the knowledge of disgrace which he must bring to her. And he had

been alone during those dark hours when he had made his decision!

To the woman who would be mother, friend, or wife to him and who yet was absent during the time of his supreme desolation, this was one of the most agonizing thoughts. What had been in his consciousness that night? What loneliness? What passion? What despair? And she had not been at his side!

It was monstrous — it seemed a very deformity of circumstance that he should have lived through these things without her and while she lay in the room above, knowing nothing of his danger, hearing some of his movements, and thinking they were winds fingering a loose blind.

From Fanny, trying not to say, "I told you so," Janet herself soon fled away and carried her misery and terror to her Aunt Abigail's house. The old lady had seen Edgar, for Janet had sent him there to call after writing of her engagement.

"He came several times after office hours. He liked to talk about you. He struck me as a lovable, surcharged, dangerous young creature.

Yes, I understood why you loved him. When we get him back I expect to love him myself. And he shall not go to his sister. He shall come here and stay safely behind my purple glass window panes."

It seemed reasonable to think that Edgar could be found if he was alive. Not even to "Aunt Abbie" could Janet confess her terror that the boy had killed himself. It was mid-winter before they had a clue to his whereabouts, and this came from his family broker who had received an order through a Western firm to sell out his entire property and deliver the equivalent in cash. It seemed for a day as if Janet was to find him, but the clue was lost immediately.

"Forty thousand dollars is n't much of a property, but it makes some cash," said an amused and interested young man who brought Miss Chilworth the news. Fanny at once took it to Janet.

"How long do you suppose he will keep it?" she could not forbear asking of the now estranged Janet.

Estranged she was in spite of the intimacy to

which circumstances still held them. Fanny now realized that the shadow of Edgar loomed too big for herself or Janet to pass through it to a common meeting-ground, and this seemed the last and most bitter of the many inflictions her brother had laid upon her life.

Knowing that he was alive, Janet's grief passed into a new stage; but she was often nearly wild with misery. Miss Abigail, hearing her up one night, came to her room.

"You must never mind waking me when you are afraid of being alone," she said. "We old people sleep light and short."

Janet sat huddled together in the great bed. "It's the wind," she said, and tried to laugh; "the wind and the snow. Have you looked out? It must have been snowing for hours. The street is white without a footprint — without a track. It makes the world seem a homeless place and the wind comes with a dreadful moaning through my window. It never stops. I wish it would n't moan like that! I dreamed that he was needing me, and when I woke I heard this wind. Now it seems as though it were his spirit out there in the cold, his spirit in

trouble and calling me. Is n't it — is n't it ridiculous to have such fancies, and suffer as much as if they were real! Do you suppose I am never to hear a word of him again? Never again in all my life to know if he is well or ill, or how he spends his days, or who his friends are, or what he sees first in the morning? Sometimes I feel as if I could n't bear so many doorways and he never coming through any of them. Is n't it a strange kind of torment that comes from the need of hearing some one's voice, of feeling a hand under yours! But it is n't so bad as not knowing how he lives or as fearing that trouble will come to him. Sometimes at night I look at the glow in the sky over the city where the saloons are and the dance halls, and other things, and I say, Is he there? Is he there? I am in torment, Aunt Abbie, I am in torment. It is like a sickness. Some days it is better and some days it is worse and often it mounts and mounts through my sleep — or through other thoughts. It is like some dreadful live thing in my body. I can't get away!" She pressed her hands to her chest as though to hold down the live thing she felt there.

"It won't last so long as you think, my dearie; not nearly so long. Life takes quite a time to pass through. If I were to tell you now that there will be years and years of it when you are going to be happy, when you will never think of him, you would not believe me; but, nevertheless, this will happen. I thought my heart was broken once, but I lived by that time and I have been happy, and there were years when I forgot. Now I am old, and like all old people I live again in the past. I seem very close to my boy who never grew old. Sometimes in the early morning I can fancy that I see him in the mist among the elms where he stood and waved me his last good-bye half a century ago. So it may be with you, my dear, but between now and then there will be a long, long time and much happy living. You will pass out of this as one passes out of a fever."

"But, Aunt Abbie, the man you loved died and so you knew that he was safe; Edgar is not safe. He is in danger, terrible danger, perhaps, in his unhappiness and desperation. The girl said I must stand by because he was the kind that gets himself locked up — that gets himself

— hanged!" Janet looked at her aunt with eyes that were suddenly lighted by terror. "It is true!" she cried. "What Mary said is true! All my life I shall be afraid — afraid — afraid!"

Miss Abigail was now afraid for her niece, and with voice that strove not to tremble, she said: —

"He is a sweet boy — a dear boy. He is full of tenderness for little things; a kitten or a child, or an old woman with the rheumatism like me, can soften him. It seemed to hurt him extraordinarily to see me try to get up after I had been sitting a bit. I think it hurt him more than it hurt me. You know, my dear, that is the only time when my rheumatism gets the better of me. Once up, I can walk as well as any of you."

In such words as these, which strove to bring before her the tender, homelike side of Edgar, did Miss Abigail win her niece away from perilous imaginings.

But the old woman's heart was deeply troubled, for during the few hours of her intercourse with Edgar her wise brain had divined the unreliability of his nature that lay in its response to the impulses that came, swift as storm.

CHAPTER II

JANET was to be the sole heir to Miss Abigail's property, and it was the vision of herself living as her aunt had lived for half a century behind the purple window panes, watching the obliteration of old landmarks, feeling life sweep by, and at the end returning into the haunted chambers of an old memory, that gave Janet her first push toward more normal feeling.

Life, as Aunt Abbie had said, takes a long time to live. And Janet resolved not to be conquered by her grief and suspense. Some sort of life must be lived outside of her thoughts of Edgar. That it could ever be happy, that she could ever wake in the morning and feel it good to begin the day, was hard to imagine; but she told herself that as she was a part of ordinary humanity the thing would be. She must live through this time as though it were an illness.

The coming of spring was hard to endure. Lovely outdoor things, — flowers, song birds, sweet young moons, an early star, — she grew

to fear, so swift did the tide of memory rise to meet them.

"I can live best in colorless places," she told her aunt, and Miss Abigail understood.

Fanny came and begged her to return to "Green Acres" for the summer; but at that Janet cried out, "No, no, Fanny! I can't. I can never go back. Can we not go somewhere else together?"

The last question was a tribute to gratitude only. The intimacy which circumstance had forced upon the two women was uncomfortable. It loomed rather stark and menacing, as intimacy does unaccompanied by understanding or actual friendship. Fanny's next remark was proof of its danger.

"Janet, my brother is an unreliable, dissipated, low-lived man. How long are you going to mourn him?"

"As long as my life," answered Janet, and felt a sickening anger leap upon her.

Gerald Stanton came, and again asked Janet to marry him, and let him take her away.

"We can go to Switzerland," he said, "or the midnight sun or the equator or any place upon

God's earth that you wish, where you may get strong. You look extraordinarily ill."

Janet had the appearance of warming her hands at a fire, but in reality she grew very cold. She could not endure the look in Gerald Stanton's eyes as he bent toward her. It was not bearable that another man should look at her like that.

"I don't want you to speak to me of love or marriage," she said, very low, in a voice of anger.

Gerald did not answer at once, but, shading his eyes with his hand, looked at her silently.

It was hardly fair to be angry with him, but Janet continued to be so, and breathed rather quickly as she looked into the flames over her stone-cold hands.

"So you care for some one else," he said at last.

She did not stir or speak, and after another pause he rose slowly.

"It does not seem to be a love that makes you happy, and so — I shall hold mine over for another day," he said.

At the door he paused, and looked at her once

more, saying in a stifled voice, "Janet, I don't want you to be unhappy."

She was instantly softened and turned her face to him. "I know; I am sorry, Gerald. You are very good and I think you always would be; but — you see — I — "

Gerald saw. In the face she turned to him was her desolation — a misery that she must have kept beaten down in his presence, and that now seemed rising like a fever. He turned away quickly and closed the door on that face.

Summer came and Janet passed it by an edge of the sea where there was much sand, and no high places or large trees, — where the ocean itself lost majesty as it came into a bay that was full of little talkative waves and had no visible outlet to great deep places.

The air was soft and restful here. The mornings and evenings were still and lovely; but not too lovely. Janet played with the children of a distant cousin. She sat on the beach with them, and with tin pails they made innumerable moulds of sand. The children screamed with laughter when her mould came out in ruins, and one day she surprised herself by laughing too.

It was quite an astonishing sensation and left her bewildered for a few moments, almost as though she could not realize from what part of herself the laughter had come.

Once Gerald Stanton anchored his boat beyond the pier and came ashore to find Janet sitting on the beach with the children about her. She did not rise to meet him because she had been wading, and her bare feet were tucked under her skirt. This she explained.

Gerald thought her very lovely. Pretty curves had come back to her face, which was brown from sun and salt winds. A strand of waving brown hair blew delightfully across her bare throat. She looked sweet, frail, but somehow dauntless. He feared a return of the hostility that she had shown him at their last interview, and tried not to look as if he thought her charming, but this evidently meant that he must not look at her at all. When he did so, after half an hour of playing with the children, there was an instant warning in her eyes.

"Whatever it is she has not got over it," he told himself, and reluctantly climbed back into his boat, finding some encouragement in the

fact that she had blushed when telling him why she kept her feet tucked under her skirt.

He did not know that Janet was thinking how perceptibly a middle-aged stoutness was growing upon him. She had also seen that he thought her charming, and of this she was glad. If Edgar came back suddenly, he must find in her something that a man could love. And from this moment she began a fresh care of her person. She walked much that her figure might keep its girlish line and motion. There were days when she looked at herself frequently in the glass, to be sure that her dress was dainty and her hair the way he used to like it.

"For he may come at any moment," she thought. But below all this there ran an undertow of grief and dread.

Miss Abigail was spending the summer in an insignificant house upon now priceless land by the shore that is called North. It was she who sent Gerald Stanton to look at Janet and it was to Miss Abigail that he now returned with his report and his hope.

Upon the latter the old lady shook her head.

"If the man were dead, I should think she

might some day come to you, and that it might be well for her to do so. But while he still walks this earth he may walk into her life again. She is thinking of this, you may be sure. I am glad she is playing with children and sand pies. This will help her to form a sort of protective epidermis, and in a few years, if nothing happens, she will have interests and associations apart from any thought of him. A man might have a chance then; but it would not be a happy thing for the husband of Janet if her boy came back. The maternal instinct of woman is the last thing that dies. There is a lot of it in any kind of love that she gives a man, and there is more than usual in this love of my poor niece. That is why it can never quite die. It may be covered over with all sorts of pleasant and interesting things, just as our old earth is covered with things brought by the successive seasons, but scratch under the seasons and it's the same old earth. So, I imagine, is it with Janet's love. It is more than conceivable that she may marry some day, and be fond of her husband in a way that he finds satisfactory enough, knowing nothing

better. If you succeed in being that husband I shall be glad for you both — if the other man never comes back."

So Miss Abigail gossiped about what was nearest her heart while she clipped off withered rosettes from her double hollyhocks. To her, Gerald Stanton did not appear as a middle-aged man with a figure of increasing clumsiness. She saw him as a man in the prime of life, vigorous, successful, kind, but not too kind. He would never be slavish. He would never bend to Janet overmuch, or weary her with useless sentiment.

But Miss Abigail also had seen Edgar. She knew something of his charm, and why Gerald must seem neutral beside that stormy, lovable boy with the spirit of desperation in him which rose with such swift and dangerous challenge to meet the extreme moments of human life —

Still clipping her flowers she sought to explain the situation further.

"I have heard him talk of her," she said. "And his feeling is more than just the love of any man for any woman. It's a kind of consecration. Paradoxically enough, the boy has a

touch of the mystic in him. I think he is like Ruskin's Knight, who needed a woman to buckle on his soul's armor. You are all like that a little. But he is more so. He realizes his weakness, and knows that if he is saved it is she who will have saved him. And whatever he becomes, she will never forget what he could be. She has seen his high hope and high purpose, and if he falls she will always mourn for it as a woman mourns for her child who is dead."

CHAPTER III

A YEAR passed and Janet had a letter from the girl, Mary.

"You might as well have married him as not, because it turned out that he did n't really marry me. He spent a lot of money trying to find out — hunting up the clergyman who said he did it and the people who saw it done; but it turned out that he was n't a real clergyman, and, anyhow, we had n't been long enough in the State for any one to have married us hard and fast. He could have come back to you then; but I guess he did n't dare. He had n't only spent his money on trying to find out if he was married. He was n't one to stand round idle when things was going on, and I guess he thought he could n't get back to you till his acts was a little better and brighter. I guess he knew he must shine some before you was willing to look at him again. I have n't much respect for you. You could have saved him by just keeping still."

So Mary had written, and the letter came into Janet's days like a hand into a house of cards.

It was another long time before she could gather up what seemed the broken and futile pieces of herself, and put them together so that her life could turn a bright façade to the world. But she ultimately contrived to do this, and little by little the upper layers of her consciousness grew into closer resemblance to the woman she pretended to be.

Two years passed and it happened as Miss Abigail had prophesied, that in Janet's life there grew up many pleasant and interesting things. She was physically well as she had not been for many years, and to the people with whom she played and worked she was as many of the other women, charming, gay, and unaccountably unmarried, who are more and more conspicuous in our American social life.

She gave much of her time to unfortunate people and was growing to be loved and sought by them. The quality of pity, already well defined in her nature before the coming and going of Edgar, was now an almost painful force. She

was haunted by an unhappy face, and having known and loved one whose high spirit never failed whether turned to good or evil, she often walked and strove by the side of those who did wrong.

But there were moments when her eyes looked suddenly dead.

Gerald Stanton was faithful, but never importunate; occasionally he treated his case playfully.

"If you wait much longer people will begin to speak of you as a woman of uncertain age," he said.

"I shall be glad while my age remains uncertain," she answered gayly. "The time will come too soon when there can be no uncertainty about it."

She spent her winters with Miss Abigail and was "at home" to her friends on Sunday afternoons. It was on one of these that some one spoke of Miss Chilworth and said that she looked changed and old. Another asked if she had ever heard from her brother. This was one of the moments when Janet's eyes seemed to die.

Occasionally, not often, she heard Edgar's name. It always jarred her life to an odd silence, and created a space about her in which there seemed to be nothing at all. So it was now.

Gerald noticed the change but failed to connect it with the name of Miss Chilworth's good-for-nothing brother. Pleasant idle talk flowed on and Janet's voice soon joined in it.

That afternoon Gerald outstayed the tea-drinkers and again asked Janet to marry him.

"I cannot," she said. "I wish I could, Gerald; but I cannot. Please don't think of it any more."

"I don't want to think of it," he said. "There are so many women in the world beside you — charming and lovely women who could make a man happy. Why is it that for me there is only you? Other women are more beautiful, or more gifted, or more witty. And yet to me you are set apart from them all like a pearl among pebbles. To me you are exquisite. Your charm is like no other charm. In fact, for me there is no other charm. My life is a colorless thing without you in it. And your life is apparently colorless because some one else is n't

in it. Janet, is it true that you are still unhappy because of this other man?"

She rose and stood by the fire with her foot on the brass andiron. He could not see her face, and for a time she did not speak.

"Life goes on pleasantly," she said at last in a voice he did not often hear, "till some one speaks his name. Then it is as though life stopped. Then it's as though I were in a banquet hall and at a given signal every one ceased eating and talking. The waiters are there, the food is halfway to the mouths of the guests, the jest is half spoken; the music playing delightfully; but suddenly everything is petrified,— as though the whole thing were the acting of marionettes and their strings had been cut. It would n't be right, would it, Gerald, to marry one man while I feel like this toward another?"

To this Gerald could give no answer.

CHAPTER IV

THERE came that day on which Mr. Stanton's card was brought to Janet while she dressed to go out.

She came downstairs buttoning her glove and found him in the hall. "How do you like my new hat?" she asked.

But instead of answering Gerald said: "That wretched brother of your friend Miss Chilworth has turned up again. He is at her house now, and she wants you to see him, God knows why! Let me go back and say you can't come."

Janet caught the banisters. Her thoughts seemed to stream and reel wildly, like flags in a gale.

"You know — that wretched brother — Miss Chilworth wants you to see him."

She heard Gerald's voice as from a distance.

"He has come back?"

"Yes — if you can call it coming back."

"Where is he? Where? Where?"

"At his sister's, I told you — Janet!" He saw her suddenly as though storm-swept.

With her hands at her throat she was murmuring wildly and softly, "Edgar — Edgar — Edgar!" It was nothing that Gerald stood there looking at her incredulous and horrified.

"Janet!"

"Yes, yes. I must go to him."

She would have passed out of the house, but that the look on his face smote her with terror.

"Is he ill — is he —"

"He is not ill." Gerald straightened himself. Then with sudden gravity and reserve he held the door open for her and helped her into Fanny's limousine which stood by the curb.

The perfect car rolled smoothly and swiftly over frozen ground. In a few moments it must bring her to his side, and she was in actual truth beside herself. Yet before she arrived something unusual in the quality of Gerald's silence found its way to her consciousness. She looked at him, and his profile was like stone. It gave her a sudden fear which was like the stab of cold wind.

"You say he is not ill?"

A smile, very dry, very bitter, was upon his lips and instantly gone. "He is not ill."

"But why am I going to him?"

"He — is rather too shabby just now to make calls."

"Why were you the person Fanny chose to send for me?"

He did not turn his head, and she saw again the fleeting smile, odd and bitter, upon his lips.

"It was by accident —" He hesitated. "By accident I was the one to find her brother."

The car stopped at a congested corner and Janet struck the window with her hand. "I wish it would go on," she said. They started again.

Her thoughts were still like banners reeling and streaming in a great wind. Rapture, and great disorder were in them. Life had given him back to her—the breath caught in her throat.

Suddenly the world seemed to grow still. She resented the intrusion of Gerald into this hour, which should have been solitary— a silent space in which for her to wait and prepare for the meeting with her boy.

She came to Miss Chilworth's house and

stopped. The sky was blue and gold. White snow lay upon the ground and in sharp streaks upon doorsteps and window ledges. The wind swept against her keen and strong. It picked up tiny particles of snow and blew them, shining and stinging, against her face. It was a bright, indifferent world she passed through, and from, into the shadow beyond Miss Chilworth's threshold. Annie, the maid who had known Edgar during his summer at "Green Acres," was in the hall. Her eyelids were red.

"Miss Chilworth told me to show you into the sitting-room at once," she said. "He—is in there." She indicated the room with a gesture and disappeared quickly.

Now outside the closed door with Gerald Stanton, Janet paused.

"I will go in alone," she said.

He looked at her and saw her—white, grave, exalted—immeasurably removed from him.

"I will go in alone."

He bowed and stood aside while she opened the door and passed from his sight.

At first the place seemed empty and she stood scarcely breathing, leaning against the door

which she had closed behind her. The room was large. It had dull, golden walls, many books, a few huge leather chairs, and a divan in the great bay window. Upon this she finally saw Edgar, lying with his back to her. She saw his dear brown head where the hair grew so thick and strong, and unlike Gerald Stanton's. She saw his arm flung boyishly upward, and his bare hand, strong and brown also, emerging from a rough shirt. His clothes were shabby and the hand seemed thin. He must have been hungry and cold and poor — it might have been a tramp that lay there in the rich golden gloom and slept so soundly.

He did not hear her entrance. She spoke his name and felt the word magical upon her lips. He did not move. She crossed the room and stood by him, thinking of all that it meant to have him beside her in the world again.

She touched his shoulder. How soundly he slept! The weight of her hand did not cause him to stir. His face was still hidden, and now that her eyes were about to behold it again she shook and could hardly stand.

She bent over him and saw his face —

For a long time after that there was silence in the great room, and then came a dreadful sobbing.

It could not be stopped and penetrated the stupefying layers of Edgar's unconsciousness gradually, till he wondered at it. Ultimately it caused him to turn stiffly, to raise himself and sit upon the edge of the sofa, wondering more and more.

He did not know the room in which he found himself, or why a woman should be found in it, sobbing in an abandoned and quite terrible way.

His hair was rather long; he pushed it out of his eyes and continued to stare at her.

She had flung the upper part of her body across a table and her sobs seemed to fight their way upward like heavy, destructive creatures. Her attitude, with its wide-stretched arms, was one of utter abandonment.

Edgar looked and looked as he sat limply upon the sofa's edge. "You will hurt yourself if you go on like that," he said at last, and indeed it seemed as though her body would be broken.

At the sound of his voice she was suddenly still for an instant, and then her weeping broke out again, more wild—more terrifying than before.

He crossed the room and crept up to her doubtfully. "What are you crying for?" he asked and touched her arm.

She lifted her face then, and he fell backward a step or two.

"You!" he whispered. "You!" He put his hand to his chest as though he had received a bullet there.

She dropped her head onto her arms again, but now she was still. The room also was quite still for a time. Dusk had gathered in dull golden corners before he touched her again and repeated in a muffled voice:—

"Why did you cry?"

She did not answer. Above her prostrate body he suddenly beheld himself repeated in a full-length mirror that lined one of the walls.

Because of her presence something keen and compelling found its way to his manhood, and in the mirror he was able to see himself as he was, degraded in dress, and with features

blurred, sodden, relaxed,—the bright youth gone out of them. He cried out in a loud voice that was still uncontrolled from his heavy stupor:

"Is it because of this that you cry?"

He pointed across her to the mirror.

She looked and understood.

His eyes dropped to her face, and he pushed the hair from his forehead again the better to see her.

"Then—" He paused. A gleam of the old grace, the old charm struck pathetically across his marred features. His lips quivered. "Then it was for me that you cried?"

The answer was in her unhappy eyes.

He gazed a moment longer before turning aside with deep-bowed head and shoulders.

Fanny Chilworth opened the door and stood on the threshold, tall and somber. She had grown thin, and there was on her face a look of heavy weariness and age that Janet remembered afterward.

To Edgar she said, "Your room is ready."

He moved toward the door and Janet, now fearing that he was again to disappear into danger, sprang to save him.

Was he not her own boy returned to her, broken, defaced, but with a gleam of his youth and lovableness left in his face!

"Edgar, you will stay with us now?"

He paused with his head still bowed and averted.

"You won't run away again?"

"Never again."

She saw him mount the stairs.

CHAPTER V

THE sound of Janet's weeping resounded through Edgar's sluggish consciousness as he stood in his room looking out upon the wide, frozen river, with its ice-boats and joyous skaters. There was keen and vigorous life there in which he seemed to have lost the right to share. He was an outcast.

Yet a woman — the woman — had wept for him.

He took a bath, and as the chill of cold water startled his atrophied senses into active life, he felt like an unventilated room into which there were coming trickles of pure air; but his head ached abominably.

The weeping of Janet sounded clearer and more poignant, and the idea that finally obsessed him was that he must stop it. The still obscure and sullen response of his nerves focused upon this one thing.

From shame and shamelessness, from memories of willful, heedless living, there now emerged one thought — he must comfort

Janet — he must stop her terrible crying. She wanted him to look like a man and a gentleman, therefore he must contrive to do so at the earliest possible moment.

To accomplish this it was first necessary to shave, and investigation proved that no razor was to be found in the house. Therefore he went out of it very quietly and observed by no one.

He was ashamed to present himself at any of the Back Bay hotels, so he went downtown, spending a nickel on car-fare, partly in order to keep warm and partly to arrive sooner. By this time he had conceived an idea upon which his imagination worked. He would see her again this very night. After a shave and a walk in the icy air he might look like the man she remembered. He wondered how long he ought to be out of doors to get back his spring and resilience, and thought that to walk twice up and down the River Way would be enough — if he walked very fast. He tried to imagine how her face would look when she saw him — how her smile would come back, and the dear look to her eyes.

Arrived at a part of the city where his appearance was not different from that of many others, he got out of the car and plunged into a piercing wind that made him shudder. His thin coat seemed like tissue paper, and he began to run through the crowded streets where lights were beginning to show. The sky above him was a dark-blue, icy, unfriendly thing, with plumes of smoke rushing and vanishing across it.

He remembered a barber shop near the station, and toward this he went only to find that the car ride had cost him the last cent of his forty thousand dollars.

A return to Miss Chilworth's house suggested itself, but was instantly rejected. He would not see any of them again until he could do so with decency. His own money was gone, but he would not be a dependent upon Fanny. This much of manhood had returned to him from his swift passing through the cold air, and the sound of Janet sobbing.

Willfully as he had done wrong, he most eagerly wished to put himself right. His conscious machinery was still inefficient, his nerves

were still clogged; but he was straining back to normal life.

It was now evident that he could not see Janet this night. The disappointment made him feel rather faint, and he sat down on the curbstone, realizing that he could not have eaten for many hours. Of the events immediately preceding his awakening in Fanny's house he had no memory. Who had brought him there? He must have been carried in like a log.

Had Janet seen?

At this he felt shame that scorched him through the icy air. Nothing in all his life had seemed to him quite as unendurable as this — to have been ridiculous, degraded, helpless under Janet's eyes. A heavy hand came upon his shoulder and a voice said: —

"Get out of this, young feller, or you'll be run in."

After this he did not dare to sit down again, and walked up and down to keep away the cold which had come back to his body like an enemy. At every few steps he passed a brilliantly lighted saloon. If he had not spent his

money, he might have gone into one of them to find relief. Comfort was there, definite as firelight, or the beloved woman.

He saw a reflection of himself in a plate-glass window, and this shocked and bewildered him again. He held his hand before him in the light that streamed outward and observed that it trembled. Then he realized that he must have something more than a shave before he could stand before Janet.

His thoughts were in great confusion and distress. Janet was still crying and somehow he must stop this. But it would be impossible to do so until he could get a shave and a decent coat. In the mean time it seemed likely that he would die of cold.

To escape this he finally went into the great station whose façade of grim, businesslike stateliness dominated the surrounding streets. Inside the building there were a great many people who looked like atoms scurrying about under huge, smoke-filled vaults. They were all busy going somewhere, or coming home, and Edgar's business was not with them. Remembering the warning when he sat on the curbstone,

he did not dare to seem unlike the rest, so he went with them to a ticket office intending to ask the price of some journey, thereby giving a semblance of reason for his presence. The woman in front of him left five dollars on the wooden ledge outside the office, and upon this his arm dropped naturally while he asked his question. No one came after him and he moved on with the thing in his hand. Here was the price of a shave, of a new tie, of a decent second-hand coat, of return to Janet, happiness, and decency. How could the money mean as much to the woman as to him? Would n't she let him keep it if she knew all? How in the balance of human life could the value of this bill weigh on her side instead of on his?

So he reasoned for an instant standing there, looking from the money in his hand to the disappearing figure of the woman, and he found no reasons against his argument for keeping it. But some deep, inherited instinct made him dash through the crowd till he reached her side, and thrust the bill into her hand.

"Keep hold of your money the next time,"

he said shrilly. "Keep hold of your money unless you want to help get us into prison." And he was gone before she could answer.

After that the eyes of the guard were upon him, for she complained of a ragged man who nearly stole her money and was rude about it.

Ultimately Edgar came to the waiting room where it was warm. He found an inconspicuous corner and sat down rather frightened by his nearness to ruin. He had done much wrong before, but never anything like this. If he had kept the bill and the woman had missed it in time, he might easily have been spotted as the last and most startlingly shabby figure that had stood at the ticket window. After this would have come prison and ruin, against which all the king's horses and men could scarcely have prevailed.

He shivered heavily in his corner and thought how quickly a man could fall; of the little thing that led such worlds away.

The place where he sat was furnace-heated, and warmth began to flow into him like a blessing till he slept.

From his slumber he was roused by another

heavy hand. A voice less friendly than the first ordered him away with the statement that tramps were not wanted there.

His physical misery now overtopped any other. There was a violent pain in his head and he felt very weak till he walked about in the comparative chill of the outside station, and found that having started his legs going there seemed no reason why they should not keep on. A large clock hanging at smoky heights told him that it was midnight, and he made his way through great spaces where only a few people moved among shoddy objects of wood and steel — boxes, gates, rails, trucks, articles denuded of all quality save usefulness. Above them was a vast emptiness in which arc lights blinked violet and white and violet again.

Through a haze of now uncertain perceptions he saw an irascible-looking man who was moving baggage as if it were a personal enemy. Of this man he asked work.

There was no immediate answer, and the person began to scribble numbers on a check while he chewed the toothpick which stuck from a corner of his mouth.

Edgar spoke again, and this time the man looked up and appeared to consider an unwelcome apparition. Edgar suddenly remembered that his father had been a director of this railroad and the thought amused him. Knowing what he looked like he could not blame the man for his expression of disgust; and in his loneliness it did not seem unpleasant to speak to a human being.

"I am not as bad as I look," he said.

To this the man replied, with an amazed stare: "Damn you, what do I care!" And returned to his work.

Edgar continued to watch him and find whimsical amusement in the thought of how easily he could once have had him discharged.

"Why don't you get out?" asked the baggageman finally.

"I want some work."

"You don't look it." But then he suddenly straightened with an idea. "I want to get home to-night. I want it like hell," he said; "but this stuff has got to be moved over to the other side before morning. See? Can you help me do it?"

"Try me."

"What will you do it for?"

"For the price of a shave and the privilege of not freezing to death in the street."

The baggage-man stared somewhat at this. The cultivated voice and language did not escape his notice.

"He is probably some damn fool who had n't sense to stick up at the top," he thought contemptuously. "I will give you a dollar," he said, "if you help me get this job off my hands by three o'clock."

After half an hour he went further. "I'll give you fifty cents for what you have done now," he said. "And if you can stay here alone and finish it, I will give you two dollars when I come back in the morning."

The proposition had risks for both of them. Edgar was trembling helplessly as the result of lifting heavy masses. It seemed doubtful if he could put through a night of work, nor could the man be relied upon to appear and pay him. Yet upon the two dollars might depend his future.

The baggage-man ran even greater risks. It

was ten to one that this tramp would go into a near-by saloon, and there would be an end of the trunk-moving and his own job with the railroad. But this he had reason to think he would lose in any case.

He pushed his cap back on his head and rubbed his forehead. "I don't know," he said, "whether you are a crook or not."

"Neither do I," said Edgar, standing with his back to a huge trunk and his arms flung over it in order not to show how near he was to falling down. Being a little light-headed and very lonely, he told the man about the five dollars he had nearly stolen.

He told it quite simply with his gray, haggard eyes looking squarely into those of the other man who continued to rub his head. He had not worked half an hour with Edgar without feeling something of his charm, and this story clinched the bargain.

"I guess you can keep straight through the night," he said with some humor, "and in the morning perhaps we can fix up something. Do you think you had better take the fifty cents now?"

Edgar considered this with his eyes still on the man's face. It was no time for pride: he was fighting for his life, so he said, "I guess I am safer without it." He was thinking of the saloons across the way.

Left alone, Edgar worked more slowly, and with frequent pauses to get his breath and wipe away the perspiration that streamed down his face at intervals when he was not very cold.

He would look at a box that must be moved, and wonder how it could be done. As he pushed and tugged, he found it helped to talk to it, — to say, "Come on — be a sport." Sometimes after he had got it across the necessary space, he would sit upon it and laugh and jeer at it because he had conquered, and look over at the others saying, "You don't look it; but you've got to come too."

There were times when he seemed almost alone under the great vaults with their arc lights, and others when trains came in and out with screams and mighty pantings. After a while he began to be afraid. He could not remember when he had last eaten, but it must have been some time ago, for his body seemed

about to refuse to stand up. How was he to finish the work and earn the money with a body that refused to stand up?

The next trunk in line was especially large, but he succeeded in getting it upon a truck and wheeling it into place. Then something seemed to snap. He crumpled up in a corner, and the vindictive cold took possession of him. A pile of gun-sacking lay within his reach; this he pulled over his body, and feeling a slight sense of comfort, yielded to drowsiness, thinking he could work better after a short rest.

Janet's crying now sounded very loud and he tried to stop it — to imagine how she would look when he went back to her. Would he see her first coming to him down a stairway? Or would she pass through a door, and perhaps hesitate on the threshold, hardly believing what she saw. He tried to picture her face and the light that would come upon it when he appeared before her as he intended to be — reformed to his strength and his manhood. What would she do? Would he then feel her hands — her lips?

The vision became clear as he lay, covered

with his gun-sacking. Then it changed. He seemed to see her coming to him, under the blinking arc lights, and between the piles and rows of trunks.

She smiled at him as she came. He said, "Janet, I nearly stole a purse to-night." And she answered, "Never mind," and took his head on her knee.

A heavy hand came pressing through his dream. It seemed that hands were continually coming upon him and goading him away from comfort. This one was rougher than the other two and a furious voice came with it. The voice called him ugly names and accused him of many things, drunkenness and laziness being the least of these.

Having been jerked violently to his feet, Edgar found that the abuse emanated from the baggage-man whose work he had undertaken to finish at night. It was now day. Half awake he felt some of the sensations known to his boyhood when he had been dragged from sleep to take a cold bath, and looking about him he answered somewhat like a little boy:—

"I did most of it. Then I fell asleep."

"Fell asleep — and lost me my job," cried the man. "You get out of here, and don't show your face again or I'll have you run in."

Edgar suddenly woke up. "I'll go when you give me what I earned," he said. And the man might have been warned by the look in his eye.

"You'll go now and quick," he shouted.

"I have done most of your work. Give me what you promised," Edgar shouted back, and leaped at his throat.

They were down in a minute, Edgar on top, because the other was taken by surprise and slipped.

Edgar felt quite strong for a moment, and hit at the men who rushed to separate the fighters. But almost immediately he crumpled up as he had done in the night and became helpless. He heard some one say: "He's fighting drunk." And another: "This is the fellow who nearly stole five dollars yesterday and then insulted the woman he took it from."

He managed to say: "I am not drunk, you fools: I am hungry."

They seemed to consider this a witticism, and laughed a great deal.

Lying in an ambulance a little later, and feeling quite comfortable but too weak to open his eyes, his mind became lucid. He thought of what a messy world it was, and how amazingly easy to do wrong when you wanted to do right. People who were friendly, like the baggageman the night before, became enemies, and you could n't explain, and had to knock them down. This also was a mistake, and got a man into jail where he supposed he was going now. The men who took him there had been unreasonable, and laughed when they should have been sorry; but perhaps this was n't their fault. Appearances were against him he knew, and again it had been impossible to explain.

It was evident now that he must wait some time before going to Janet.

CHAPTER VI

"JANET, he is not worth thinking of — forget him." Gerald Stanton was grave and kind. "Try not to worry about him any more. He is not worth it."

Janet sat alert, with her hands clasped about her knees. She looked straight at him with eyes that were dry and bright.

"You must think of your happiness."

"It does n't count," she said.

Gerald felt a desire to shake this beloved woman, but he answered with patience.

"He is simply punk, Janet. You must realize that."

She did not reply and continued to look at him with a very bright, steady gaze.

Then Gerald told her how he had first found Edgar by accident in the court when other persons he brutally called "drunks" had been brought in. Gerald himself was there to pay a fine for overspeeding his French automobile. On hearing Edgar's name, which the boy had tried to conceal with such little wits as were

left to him, Gerald had hesitated about informing Fanny, but ultimately did so, advising her to leave him where he was. This Miss Chilworth had unwisely refused to do. The proof of her unwisdom was that the fellow had immediately run away again. It was possible that he had a criminal record, and was afraid of being held up if he were lifted into the limelight of a return to his sister's home.

So Gerald talked, still grave and kind, hoping to bring this woman to reason, till she suddenly gave a sharp cry and rose flinging her arms wide.

"I would rather you twisted my arms till they broke! I would rather you broke every bone of my body. It would n't hurt so much as telling me what makes him seem unworthy," she cried. "I am in torment. Go away, Gerald! Go away! You make it worse. Let me hear that he has forgotten me, or that I am never to see him again, and I can breathe; but if it is true that he is not worth my sorrow — why then I cannot live — then I have not my memory even — life would be like ashes. I could not live. Go away, and may I never see you again."

To Miss Abigail, Gerald took his bewilderment and pain. He had not known that Janet possessed such emotional stress, and he found himself loving her more for it.

"It seems incredible that she can care so for a man like that," he said. "For a jail-bird as likely as not, a drunkard probably, a weakling certainly."

"Women do not stop loving a man because he gets into prison, or drinks, or yields to unworthy impulses. He was easy to love, Gerald, and one who loved him could not soon forget."

"But what is he now, Miss Abigail? What is he now?"

"God knows. He has evidently been a spendthrift with his youth, with all the bright, shining things that made him what he was. Perhaps he is fallen beyond hope; but perhaps he is not so changed as he seems. A ragged coat and an unshaved face on top of a week of heavy drinking might not leave much of your present self to you."

Gerald was tried by this exhibition of the lack of logic in woman. "There would have to be

considerably less of me than there is before I came to a ragged coat and a week of debauch," he said with truth.

"Janet is pitiful," continued the old woman. "If life is to be supportable, and human suffering not to be a thing of inexplicableness and shame to creation, there has to be pity opposed to the 'survival of the fittest' — the ruthless law of evolution. I think it's woman who has charge of pity."

Fanny had sent for Janet the week following her brother's degrading transit through her house. She was in her room when Janet arrived, and the curtains were partly drawn, but the light was not dim enough to hide the change in her face.

"Fanny! you are ill!" was Janet's involuntary exclamation.

"Yes." Fanny's monosyllable seemed to close the subject. She lay on a sofa and explained with measured, well-considered words why she had sent Gerald to bring her friend to Edgar. "I wanted you to see them side by side," she said. "I wanted you to realize what

you were giving up, and what you were giving it up for. My brother —" She paused before continuing without change of tone: "My brother is probably fallen beyond any power of getting up. Don't go, Janet."

Janet had risen; she felt as though her soul were bleeding. Fanny put out her hand and made her request again, without hurry or uncertainty. Some heavy quality that might have been sadness was with her that day.

"Don't go, Janet."

"Fanny!" she cried. "Do not speak to me of Gerald Stanton. I knew one who was part of the youth of all life. I look back now and he seems to have been like the bright things one meets in the morning. And he was generous, and quick to feel pity and shame. He was quick to suffer, too, though he was so joyous, and without fear. And, oh, he had such shining hope! You tell me that he has fallen unspeakably and I saw — I saw — But he may not have gone so far that I cannot bring him back. While there is a shred of him left, I shall love him. Fanny — I am in torment."

To this Fanny Chilworth listened motionless.

It was as though she surveyed a struggle from some great distance.

"It will end," she said. "For there is always — death."

"If you had only loved him, Fanny!"

After a long pause, Fanny said: —

"I am ready, now, to make amends for any wrong I may have done. We will try to find him; but I had hoped, first, to have your assurance that you had ceased to care. Gerald Stanton is hunting for him."

"Gerald Stanton!"

"He was the one I thought of first."

"But he might not be fair! He would look for the worst."

"This morning he has brought me news."

"Of Edgar?"

"Of Edgar."

"Oh, Fanny! What news? What news?"

"Gerald is an honorable man." There was rebuke in Fanny's voice.

"What have you heard?"

To Janet, now on her knees beside the sofa, Miss Chilworth looked with a strange, grave detachment.

"How much you care," she said.

"Oh, Fanny. What have you heard?"

"Mr. Stanton has been looking for records in police stations. He has found Edgar's."

"Oh!" Janet shrank back from the sofa as though a sustaining cord had broken within her. He had said, "Never again."

"He was brought in the morning after you saw him here."

Janet sat huddled on the floor beside Fanny's sofa, her head bowed.

"He got into trouble at the railway station. Edgar and trouble — Edgar and trouble —" Miss Chilworth pressed her hand to her forehead. "When have I heard his name without trouble? And now — even now — he does not leave me in peace." She spoke the last words in a rising voice that was not without passion.

Janet, still crouching, asked, "Where is he?"

"We do not know."

"Gone — he is gone again?"

Miss Chilworth's arms dropped to her sides, and she closed her eyes wearily. "We must try to find him," she said.

It was some days after this that the mail brought Janet a few words in his handwriting.

"I shall come back."

The postmark was from Chicago, in which labyrinth Miss Chilworth's messengers searched for him in vain.

CHAPTER VII

After the first written words that Edgar had sent Janet from the darkness, little notes came from time to time, and then came no more.

He wrote, "I shall not come back till I have proved to myself that I have conquered temptation, and alone — till I can come to you and say, 'Janet, I am a man, even without your help.'"

After this he had not written again. The letters had been posted from stray towns in which he never seemed to have stayed long enough to leave a trace; or else they had been posted by friends at some distance from his actual place of lodging.

How foolish, and how like him it was to go out alone upon the earth, and try to make himself a shining armor before coming to her!

Miss Abigail watched, and once she did a useless thing.

"My dear," she said, "I should be happier if I could see you settled in this world before I leave it."

"I am settled," replied Janet. "I have my sentence. It is for life."

"Nonsense," said the old woman.

Janet went to her room and brought back a small package of letters. "Listen. I saw his face that day when he slept, and if he became wholly like that, I could not have gone on loving him — something in me would have died, and you would all have said, 'She has got over it!' — though in my heart there would have lain something dead. But when we faced each other, when he saw that I suffered, there came into his face the old look of sorrow and shame, and I knew that he was still my boy. Since then — see." She spread the letters of her package on the table. "Here, and here, and here! He has been writing me. He has gone out into the world like Sir Galahad to fight for the Holy Grail, and until he finds it he will not come back to me." Her voice broke between laughter and tears. She sat on the floor and swept the letters into her lap. "Is n't he foolish! Is n't he — is n't he dear! But I am so afraid he will find the dragons instead of the Grail."

It was soon after this that the letters ceased to come.

Toward Gerald Stanton she would not at once relent. "Between you and me there is always what I know you think of him," she said, "and it fills me with a kind of anger that is more than I can bear."

Yet she was forced to meet him at Fanny's house, and sometimes, seeing that he was unhappy, she was sorry. Once she cried out, "Oh, I don't want you to suffer, Gerald." From this he took courage.

Spring came again to the earth and passed, before Janet realized that Edgar's sister knew herself to be dying.

Miss Chilworth never spoke openly of illness. Her pride and stiffness of nature forbade anything that seemed an appeal for sympathy, and she must have been lonely to the end, though she gave no sign.

It now became easy for Janet to think upon the good qualities of Fanny Chilworth. She had sought to do right, and there had been moments when her conduct toward Edgar had reached nobility, as on that day when she told

him that if he would live worthily he could win the largest share of their father's love. She had sought to do right, and perhaps it was not her fault that her nature was a little bleak. It had not been easy for her to love, or be loved; yet she had cared deeply for Janet, and lost her through the existence of that person who had never touched her life save to blight it, and whom she must yet struggle to save.

It was in midsummer that she died, and Janet found herself in possession of the mountain home where her brief life with Edgar had begun and ended.

It seemed to her that she could never return, but it became a business necessity for her to do so, and in the early autumn she crept back, only half daring to look about her.

As on that spring evening so long ago, she was met at the station by the Chilworth automobile, which, like house and grounds, was kept as in Fanny's lifetime until the estate should be settled. But now it was autumn, and the air was hot and withered by smoke from distant forest fires.

The door of Fanny's house stood open for her as of old, but the threshold, though bright, was empty as she crossed it, and met an assault of memories.

Inanimate things — chairs, walls, bric-à-brac — seemed endowed with piteous life. They held associations that hurt and hurt again. Her memory had been forgetting compared with the force of this rebirth into life with Edgar, that was yet no life. She feared to look at or touch the things about her, so dynamic was the shock of their appeal.

On the terrace, from which daylight was fading, she lifted her eyes slowly — slowly — until they opened upon the mountain. For a moment she gazed, then swept her cloak over her face and shivered.

Annie came to her to ask when she would dine. The girl looked depressed and lonely; she was one of the two servants who had been kept in the house while its mistress lay dying in the city.

She longed to talk, and lingered in Janet's room doing unnecessary things.

"And will you be staying, Miss?" she asked.

Janet did not know.

"It's been terrible lonely," continued the girl. "I would n't have stayed but that I could n't bear to cross Miss Chilworth and her so ill." She wiped her eyes. "She was a kind lady, take her all in all. 'Times it seems a shame we don't see how kind people are till they are gone from us, and then the little things they did comes creeping back like childer, with no one to comfort them. There's some nights I can't sleep thinking how often I made her speak to me about leaving burnt matches where they could be seen in the fireplaces. You'll miss her yourself, Miss, — sure and you will? She thought a terrible lot of you."

That evening the scrap of an old moon came up, and seemed to hang in a lost and hesitating way just above the copper beech. It shed a remote and humble light, for which a few flowers in the neglected garden seemed grateful, as they lifted up small faintly gleaming faces from the dark earth.

Janet walked along the paths. The air, soft but still, seemed withered by the breath of burning woods, but there was some sweetness in the garden.

In after years she saw the dim, small flowers of that night as the memories Annie had spoken of, which came creeping back like children whom there is no one to comfort. But now her pain was harsh and restless. It urged her to movement, to conjecture, to struggle. Edgar might be found! He might come back! He might be dead! There might be a letter from him to-morrow morning — or in the evening — and if not then, on the next day! She wondered if something more could not be done to find him, and decided to write to another lawyer that evening.

So she walked the garden paths and thought nothing about the dim, small faces that lifted themselves about her, nor of the old moon offering her soft and humble light; fancies about flowers and moons cannot exist beside fundamental human experience.

CHAPTER VIII

It was some weeks before the knowledge of Fanny Chilworth's death reached her brother.

That night he went up into a mountain pasture and lay on his back in the moonlight. His outstretched hands fell upon short, dry grass and stunted blueberry bush, and he seemed lifted in high solitude toward the moon. The time was still as frost.

As he lay with his face to the sky, Edgar saw only this moon; not the sensuous moon of honey and summer,— the compeller of magical essences that entangle the thoughts of man; but a cold and relentless presence in which his mind was cool and grave. He lifted up his hand. It showed unearthly white; but it was steady. He turned it round, considering it with an odd detachment before he let it fall from his sight. Body and soul of him were now in possession of their manhood, and his thoughts passed over the ways by which he had won it back. They were not always forward. This would not have

been possible to his nature, which he saw very clearly in this ruthless hour.

At moments when he had failed, the sound of Janet's crying had been insistent and sometimes agonizing. This had saved him, and the habit he deliberately formed of writing her once a week had kept the consciousness of her very near. Without it he could not have fought his way out of the jungle, and unless she was with him during the years to come he would not keep in the safe and regular paths of successful men. This he now saw and reckoned with deliberately as he lay there choosing his future.

Fanny had left him money. The entire income of his father's property was his for ten years, at the end of which time he was to come into full possession, if several resolute and respected gentlemen should decide that he deserved it. Ten years of probation, not for love, but for money, and the grudging, carefully considered approval of some eminent citizens! The thought had galled him, and the fact that he deserved it did not ease the friction. This made him smile at himself, an odd, dry little smile that there was no one to share.

He did not have much respect for himself that night, nor much respect for life.

Something else had come in the bundle of papers which had reached him on the success of a widely advertised search for his person. Among the newspaper clippings concerning his sister's death and the disposition of her properties was one saying that her New Hampshire estate "Green Acres" had been left to Miss Janet Eversly, whose engagement to Gerald Stanton, the well-known lawyer, was shortly expected.

It was one of life's ironies that this notice should have been served upon Edgar, and it was in very fact a notice determining his life's sentence.

He now seemed to have reached a barren place: a place unencumbered by fragrance or warmth. There were no ardors here, no hopes. He was not unhappy, and yet he was not sure that he wished to go on living.

The mood was as a scar resulting from the injuries he had given himself. His hand might be steady even in this white light. His thought might be clear and the young blood course

freely through his veins. Yet he was scarred. He had put his body and soul through flames for which wholesome man was not intended, and he would never again be as if those flames had not licked him. There would be times when the taste of life seemed as ashes instead of food, when he would be spiritually cold, and the presence of no beloved woman or child could warm him. There would always be parts of him that were callous, and other parts where his nerves were like traps waiting to be sprung.

But an hour like this, when he deliberately surveyed the field of life and made his choice of going forward or back upon it, would not come to him again.

He lifted his hand once more into the moonlight, not to see if it were steady, but to look at it curiously, half wondering of what it was made, and for what. Man seemed an almost abnormal thing in this inhuman night. He was conscious of cosmic things, of worlds innumerable which had no concern with him. How could it matter to this alien universe what destiny he chose? He saw good and evil as things deserving of no especial reverence. They had been

evolved from the shuffle of adjustments which human beings must live by in order to exist comfortably together. He would go far before consciously injuring any one; but what could his acts matter so long as they hurt only himself?

Now he no longer heard Janet weeping for his downfall.

Looking back upon the morning of this day he saw that he had still loved Janet, and would not have believed in a time when he should not love her; but in the lonely region of his spirit to which he had now come, he saw himself without prejudice or passion. Men ultimately cease to love women who have forgotten them, and he was as other men.

It was not at the moment thinkable that he should ever care for anything again; but in his clarified vision, which seemed bright like the night, he was able to see that indifference to life would pass like love; but sooner. He felt a ruthless mastery over fate, and his thoughts moved with shuttle-like freedom among the elements from which he was to choose. Liquor, gambling, wild riding, adventures outside the

law, — he looked at them and his pulses did not stir; but he knew that from such things he would ultimately draw splendid excitement. Danger would be with them, and age would come, — before its time. He did not deceive himself into thinking that he could avoid the harvest of dragon's teeth; but there was always death, and the moment in which he could choose it. Was it not better to join the carnival while there was youth and time, than to gather mould and moss in a tepid existence of orderly and respectable happenings? And there would be Janet to see as the wife of another man.

Having come to this thought, something hot seemed about to surge and tear upward through his being, but he controlled it. This was not a moment for heat.

Before he went down from the mountain he knew that he should have made his decision; but the night was still young. He had long, silent hours yet in which to choose. So he lay there motionless, thinking implacably, his arms wide outstretched, his face like carven stone turned upwards to the moon.

Still, and more still, grew his thoughts in this

leisure which seemed immortal. And now to his mind and spirit there began to steal a consciousness that the night was beautiful.

The moon slipped downward from her zenith, and the shadow of a small pine moved toward Edgar. It crept over the ground without his knowledge — crept and slipped till it passed tenderly across his face. Into his wide-opened eyes the light came soft, broken, shimmering. He could almost feel the pattern of shadow upon his features, and it was like a caress — like the fingers of a child across his lips. The lips quivered suddenly and smiled in response. He closed his eyes and felt the tenderness of shadow upon his lids, and at that something broke within him.

He moved. He rolled over and turned his face to the ground. The thought of Janet's sweetness was with him, and there came again the memory of her weeping. The sense of her charm filled his being like a fragrance. Memories of her swept in upon him, memories of the way she stood, or smiled, or shook her head, and the comfort that came with her hands. He saw again the little house of their planning, where

she would walk and wait for him by the hollyhocks at twilight, and he saw the long years filled with her sympathy and comradeship. How had he thought to forego these things? Had she ceased to love him? Could a woman weep as she had wept, and forget so soon? Could she love as they had loved, and not come back to him? What were the blatant excitements of that other life he had considered compared to a life with Janet?

He raised himself on his arm and looked down into the valley that was still remote in a dim, silver mist. Somewhere among the cities she lived, and he must go to her. He had won the right and proved his capacity for manhood. He tried for the thousandth time to think of her face when he would stand before her suddenly, and whisper, "Janet, Janet." Not for all the kingdoms would he forego that hour. What if the other man should be there when he came; the man from whom he knew that he could take her, but by whose side he had once seen her standing in the wide pillared doorway of his sister's home! Now the hot terrible thing was upon him again, surging, and tearing up-

ward through his being. This time it was not to be controlled; it rolled over him like a sea with an onslaught that brought him to his feet.

The bald and silent hour of Edgar's life was gone. Surcharged and full of storms, he plunged downward toward the valley.

CHAPTER IX

BEFORE daylight Edgar had telegraphed to the guardians of his estate, asking them to send money. He thought it might reach him the next morning at latest, and then he could buy suitable clothes and go to Janet. The more he thought the less he believed that she was to marry Gerald Stanton; but fear of it worked headily within him. It would not let him rest. Her charm seemed the greater for it, and the hours that kept him from her stretched like nightmare.

It appeared that money could not be sent on the demand of a telegram that signed itself Edgar Chilworth. He must be identified. He must wait. Wait! The word smote him intolerably. How could he wait? Another day and another and another before he could get to town and be looked at, or else be appraised by a judge, who was one of his trustees, and lived in the next county. This gentleman had sent word to the effect that he would like Edgar to call upon him in order that he might consider the

likeliness of his being a fraud, before advancing enough money for a suit and a tie.

Edgar was not sure that he could convince this person of his genuineness. He had been haymaker and carpenter and road-digger and hired man for the last months. He was dressed as a tramp, and now that he began to notice such things he did not like the look of his hands. Gentlemen did not have such hands or finger nails.

Moreover, it is not invariably easy to get into another county when you have n't enough money to buy a ticket.

He had to work half a morning in a woodyard before he earned enough to travel on, and then he found the last train had left.

Two days were wasted before he reached the home of his trustee and found him smoking a pipe at the open door of his conservatory. It had been almost necessary to fight the head gardener and butler before penetrating so far.

To the ragged person who said that he was Edgar Chilworth the Judge turned a gaze at once reserved and quizzical.

"I know I don't look it," said the ragged per-

son, returning that part of the gaze which was quizzical. "My hands are the worst — see." He held them out boyishly.

The Judge removed his pipe from his mouth.

"How am I to know whether you are Edgar Chilworth or not?" he asked.

"Well—" Edgar considered it while he stood easily just outside the door with one outstretched hand resting against the wall. "I just am," he said finally, and then smiled with the older man because of the absurdity of this proffered identification. "I nearly had to knock down the gardener before he would let me through," he added by way of further ingratiation. "I expect he will have the police here soon."

"You are known to the police, I understand."

The Judge stated this with pitiless suddenness and Edgar's face burned a dull, stormy red; but his eyes did not fall.

"Yes."

This answer was enough for the older man. He knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Have you been pretty decent lately?"

"Yes."

"Not very prosperous, eh?"

Edgar looked himself up and down, but the smile did not come back to his face.

"Why did n't you try to work up again among people of your own kind?"

"I wanted to prove that I could keep right under difficulties."

"And now you are sick of it?"

"Now I have done it."

"For how long?"

"Four months."

The Judge resisted an impulse to smile again.

Edgar endured those questions because he liked the Judge.

"Suppose I believe you are the person you say you are — and write others of my belief. What do you intend to do? Wait round here till you get some money?"

"I don't want to wait till you write the others."

"In a hurry?"

"My God — yes!"

His gray eyes looked suddenly haggard, and there came a pain into them which the Judge found rather startling.

"What do you want, then?" he asked.

"Clothes. I want money enough to buy a suit that will make me look like a gentleman. I can." He smiled, though his eyes remained haggard in the sunshine and remindful of some of the harm he had done to his bright youth. "Can't you give me some of my own money now?"

The Judge puffed his pipe a long time with his keen old eyes on the hills, before he spoke again.

"Can't you give me enough for a clean shirt and a pair of shoes?" pleaded Edgar. "Never mind about enough to make me look like a gentleman. That won't matter if — if anything does."

The Judge considered this and finally took his pipe from his mouth.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

Janet had dreary duties to perform in Miss Chilworth's house which was now to be her own. There were personal things to be disposed of. How many things Fanny had! Her life seemed to have been passed taking care of them,

and in the hour of her death she had sought to work through them, forcing Gerald Stanton and Janet together by putting one in charge of the other's property.

It was necessary for business notes to pass between them, and once he came to spend a night at the village, and visited her on business matters.

Whenever she looked at him her eyes seemed to say, "Don't tell me that you love me. Don't say it again."

At the very last he stood by her side on the terrace. "It's a strange world, is n't it?" said he.

"Yes. I do not think I like it very well. Do you?"

When he had gone she remained standing there. The hour was still. Summer seemed to brood regretfully upon the need of her passing. Janet thought of Fanny, whose life had been sad and seemed all the sadder for her satisfaction with it. She missed Fanny: she remembered her many kind acts, and then was sad because she could not miss her more.

She thought of Gerald Stanton who had gone

on loving her so obstinately, and got nothing for it.

So she stood, thinking shrouded thoughts, while Edgar was on his way to her.

Even at the last there was danger, for as he stepped out of the train, Gerald Stanton stepped into it.

There is always danger for such as Edgar. The chances of life were against a happy ending to his story; but the right woman waited for him, and he loved her much.

She was still standing where Gerald had left her. A very young bird began to practice a song as it sat precariously upon the garden wall. She turned to look. She smiled a little, and lifting her eyes saw Edgar standing just beyond the open gate.

He had come so quietly that even the bird had not heard and practiced on. His large gray eyes were dark with emotion and grave humility. He was so still that he seemed unreal. His face, young and thin, as though from privation, questioned her mutely. It was a face from which all grossness had gone. High chastities seemed to be upon it as on that day

when she had seen it lying helpless and unconscious by her knee.

He did not cross the garden threshold before saying:—

"Janet, I have been living as you would wish, so that I might be worthy. May I — come back?"

She called his name and ran stumbling toward him. She caught his hands; but they held her off while he said:—

"Janet, before this I did wrong — again and again I did wrong. Do you care enough —"

She cast herself upon him then, laughing and weeping, and he gave a cry as his arms came about her.

THE END

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